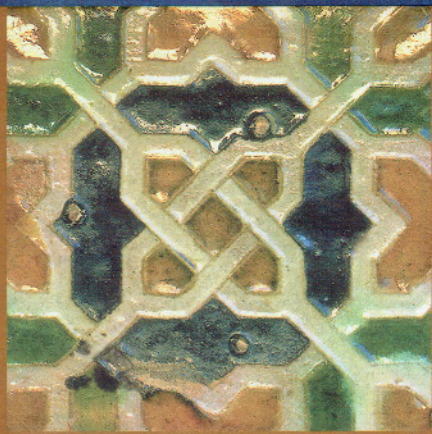


# Civilization of Faith

Solidarity, Tolerance and Equality in a Nation Built on Sharia

من روائع حضارتنا



Dr. Mustafa as-Sibâ'ee



IN THE NAME OF

**ALLAH**

THE ALL-COMPASSIONATE, ALL-MERCIFUL



# **Civilization of Faith**

**A Journey through Islamic History**

*New and revised edition*

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# PRONUNCIATION AND TRANSLITERATION CHART

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated as:
أ	short 'a', as in <i>cat</i>	a
آ - إ	longer 'a', as in <i>cab</i> (not as in <i>cake</i> )	â
ب	/b/ as in <i>bell</i> , <i>rubber</i> and <i>tab</i>	b
ت	/t/ as in <i>tap</i> , <i>mustard</i> and <i>sit</i>	t
ة	takes the sound of the preceding diacritical mark sometimes ending in h (when in pausal form): ah, ih, or ooh; or atu(n), ati(n) or ata(n) when in uninterrupted speech	h or t (when followed by another Arabic word)
ث	/th/ as in <i>thing</i> , <i>maths</i> and <i>wealth</i>	th
ج	/j/ as in <i>jam</i> , <i>ajar</i> and <i>age</i>	j
ح	a 'harsher' sound than the English initial /h/, and may occur medially and in word-final position as well	ḥ
خ	as in <i>Bach</i> (in German); may occur initially and medially as well	kh
د	/d/ as in <i>do</i> , <i>muddy</i> and <i>red</i>	d
ذ	as in <i>this</i> , <i>father</i> , and <i>with</i>	dh
ر	/r/ as in <i>raw</i> , <i>art</i> and <i>war</i> ; may also be a rolled r, as with Spanish words	r



Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated as:
ز	/z/ as in <i>zoo</i> , <i>easy</i> and <i>gaze</i>	z
س	/s/ as in <i>so</i> , <i>messy</i> and <i>grass</i>	s
ش	as in <i>ship</i> , <i>ashes</i> and <i>rush</i>	sh
ص	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing it as /sw/ or /s/ farther back in the mouth	ṣ
ض	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing /d/ farther back in the mouth	ḍ
ط	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing /t/ farther back in the mouth	ṭ
ظ	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing 'the' farther back in the mouth	<u>dh</u>
ع	no close equivalent in English: a guttural sound in the back of the throat	‘
غ	no close equivalent in English, but may be closely approximated by pronouncing it like the French /r/ in 'rouge'	gh
ف	/f/ as in <i>fill</i> , <i>effort</i> and <i>muff</i>	f

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated as:
ق	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing /k/ farther back in the mouth	q
ك	/k/ as in <i>king</i> , <i>buckle</i> and <i>tack</i>	k
ل	/l/ as in <i>lap</i> , <i>halo</i> ; in the word <i>Allah</i> , it becomes velarized as in <i>ball</i>	l
م	/m/ as in <i>men</i> , <i>simple</i> and <i>ram</i>	m
ن	/n/ as in <i>net</i> , <i>ant</i> and <i>can</i>	n
ه - ه - ه	/h/ as in <i>hat</i> ; unlike /h/ in English, in Arabic /h/ is pronounced in medial and word-final positions as well	h
و	as in <i>wet</i> and <i>away</i>	w
و (as a vowel)	long u, as in <i>boot</i> and <i>too</i>	oo
ي	as in <i>yet</i> and <i>yard</i>	y
ي (as a vowel)	long e, as in <i>eat</i> , <i>beef</i> and <i>see</i>	ee
ع	glottal stop: may be closely approximated by pronouncing it like 't' in the Cockney English pronunciation of <i>butter</i> : <i>bu'er</i> , or the stop sound in <i>uh</i> — <i>oh</i> !	' (Omitted in initial position)

**Diphthongs:**

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated as:
أَوْ ، و	Long o, as in <i>owe</i> , <i>boat</i> and <i>go</i>	au, aw, ow
أَي ، يَ	Long 'a', as in <i>able</i> , <i>rain</i> and <i>say</i>	ay, ai, ei

**Diacritical marks (*tashkeel*):**

Name of mark	Pronunciation	Transliterated as:
fathah	very short 'a' or schwa (unstressed vowel)	a
kasrah	shorter version of ee or schwa (unstressed vowel)	i
Dammah	shorter version of oo	u
shaddah	a doubled consonant is stressed in the word, and the length of the sound is also doubled	Double letter
sukoon	no vowel sound between consonants or at the end of a word	Absence of vowel

## ARABIC HONORIFIC SYMBOLS USED IN THIS BOOK

(سُبْحَانَكَ): *Subḥânahu wa ta‘âlâ* — ‘The Exalted’

(سَلَامٌ): *Şalla-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* — ‘Blessings and peace  
be upon him’

(سَلَامٌ): *‘Alayhis-salâm* — ‘Peace be upon him’

(رَضِيَ): *Raḍiya Allâhu ‘anhu* — ‘May Allah be pleased with him’

(رَضِيَ): *Raḍiya Allâhu ‘anhâ* — ‘May Allah be pleased with her’

## ABOUT THE WORD 'LORD'

The word *lord* in English has several related meanings. The original meaning is 'master' or 'ruler', and in this sense it is often used to refer to human beings: 'the lord of the mansion' or 'Lord So-and-So' (in the United Kingdom, for example). The word *Lord* with a capital L is used in the lexicon of Islam to refer to the One and Only God — Allah. In Islam, there is no ambiguity about the meaning of this word. While it is true that one may occasionally use the word *lord* (whether capitalized or not) to refer to a human being, in Islamic discourse the reference of this term is always clear from the context. Whereas for Christians, Hindus and other polytheists, the word *Lord* with a capital 'L' may refer to Allah, to Jesus or to some imagined deity, for Muslims, there can be no plurality of meaning. Allah alone is the Lord, and the Lord is Allah — not Jesus, not Rama, not any other being.

The Editor

## WHEN 'JIHAD' REFERS TO FIGHTING

Although jihad is often translated into English as 'holy war', it must be noted that war has never been described as 'holy' in any of Islam's primary texts or even early Islamic literature. Linguistically speaking, jihad is an Islamic term that applies to a broad spectrum of activities, ranging from daily striving to meet the day's challenges, to the striving against one's desires and self, to the struggle to provide for one's family. Its basic definition is 'the act of striving or struggling in the way of Allah'. Therefore, jihad is not limited to war; it includes struggling with one's soul, speech, body and wealth so that the message of Allah reaches all humans willing to receive it.

Islamic scholars have referred to different types of jihad, such as jihad against the self (to understand Islam, act upon it, call others to it and be patient with the difficulties of making this call), jihad against the Devil (repelling Satanic whispers, doubts and lusts), jihad against the tongue (controlling it, using it to enjoin what is good, forbid what is wrong, spread the correct teachings of Islam and answer false ideologies), jihad against aggression (with the purpose of protecting Islam and the lives, honour and property of Muslims) and other types of jihad like jihad against the hypocrites, jihad against oppressors and jihad against mischief makers.

Jihad — in the context of fighting — has specific rules and conditions that need to be met before jihad is initiated. The first rule is that people are not to be fought because of what they believe, or to coerce them to accept Islam. The second rule is to 'fight only those who fight you' and never initiate unprovoked aggression (*Qur'an* 2: 190). That means that Muslims are only allowed to fight back, rather than initiating fighting; but 'fighting back' includes fighting against actual aggression as well as proactively addressing real threats of aggression. In both cases, Muslims are instructed to be prepared and ready to defend their nation before they actually engage in military conflict. There are additional conditions, but the above-mentioned conditions are vital for putting jihad in its broader meaning in the proper context.

Another condition of the sort of jihad which involves fighting is that it should take place only under an Islamic authority that 'raises the banner' for such jihad. It is not following the Sunnah at all for any individual or self-appointed group of Muslims to wage war on behalf of a nation. Instead, Muslims should be united under the single authority of an imam or khaleefah (caliph), except in the case where an individual needs to defend his own family and property, or to help his neighbour to do so. This is proved by the example of the early Muslims as well as texts in the *Qur'an* and the Sunnah:

«When there comes to them [the hypocrites] a matter related to [public] safety or fear, they spread it about; if only they had referred it to the Messenger and to such of them as are in authority, those among them who are able to think through the matter would have understood it.» (*Qur'an* 4: 83)

«Hudhayfah ibn Yaman asked the Prophet (ﷺ): What if (the Muslims) have no single leader (they are divided into disputing

groups)? The Prophet (ﷺ) answered: If they have no single leader or unified group, then leave all these disputing groups, even if you have to bite on a tree until your death.» (part of a longer hadith recorded by Bukhari)

There are other conditions for jihad. In general, the rules laid out for war in Islam should be upheld unless there is some legitimate need or strategy when fighting occurs that would necessitate going against those rules. A Muslim should not kill himself or herself (*Qur'an* 4: 29) nor kill another Muslim, except by accident (*Qur'an* 4: 92). Women, children, the elderly and other non-combatants should not be harmed. Land should not be destroyed, nor trees cut down. Corpses should not be mutilated. Islam should not be imposed upon non-believers. Rather, if combatant non-Muslims choose on their own to embrace Islam, even if only as a deceitful trick, it should be accepted by the Muslim leadership, and fighting should stop. Peace should be sought before lives are lost. Treaties and agreements should be upheld. Prisoners should be well-treated. Above all, justice must be done.

﴿Fight in the path [according to the rules set by Allah] of Allah only those who fight you, but do not commit aggression [transgress limits]. Allah does not love aggressors. ...And fight them until persecution is no more, and religion is [freely embraced] for [the individual's faith in] Allah. But if they desist, then let there be no aggression except against transgressors.﴾

(*Qur'an* 2: 190, 193)

﴿Allah does not forbid you from being good, kind, just, and fair to those who have not fought you because of religion nor driven you from your homeland. Allah loves those who are just. Allah forbids you from giving allegiance to those who have fought you because



of religion and have driven you from your homeland, and those who supported your expulsion...﴾      (*Qur'an* 60: 8-9)

In addition, the Muslim nation is encouraged to maintain strong military capabilities to promote justice and to deter acts of war and aggression.

﴿And make ready for them [their potential aggression] all you can of power, including steeds of war, to deter the enemy of Allah and your enemy, and others besides, whom you may not know but whom Allah knows.﴾      (*Qur'an* 8: 60)

The Editor

# THE ISLAMIC VIEWPOINT ON SLAVERY

Slavery existed before the coming of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Islam did not abolish slavery, though it put limits on it and made freeing slaves a highly virtuous act.

In Islam, there is only one way a person may become enslaved and that is by being a non-Muslim among people who have been captured after raising arms and fighting against the Muslim nation. When such people have been conquered, the Muslim ruler has the option of enslaving them or releasing them (with or without ransom), and he makes this decision based upon the best interests and safety of the state. The Prophet (ﷺ) strongly condemned any other means of enslaving a person. Thus, no person may become enslaved due to poverty, debt, kidnapping, committing a crime, voluntarily submitting to slavery, or any other means.

Islam encourages the freeing of slaves and has made the freeing of a slave a form of expiation for sins such as accidental manslaughter, the breaking of a vow, or voiding a fast by engaging in sexual intercourse. The freeing of slaves is also one of the categories upon which the zakâh funds should be spent (*Qur'an* 9: 60). The Qur'an calls the freeing of a slave an act of righteousness that may be performed at any time:

«Righteous are those who believe in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the scripture, and the prophets; and they give money,

cheerfully, to the relatives, the orphans, the needy, the wayfarer, the beggars, and to free the slaves.» (Qur'an 2: 177)

In regards to the treatment of slaves, the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said: «They are your brothers whom Allah has put under your authority, so if Allah has put a person's brother under his authority, let him feed him from what he eats and clothe him from what he wears, and let him not overburden him with work, and if he does overburden him with work, then let him help him.» (Bukhari)

«Whoever accuses his slave when he is innocent of what he says will be flogged on the Day of Resurrection.» (Bukhari)

«Whoever slaps his slave or beats him, his expiation is to manumit him.» (Muslim)

«If a man had a slave woman whom he fed — and fed her well, and taught her — and taught her well, then he set her free and married her — he will have a double reward.» (Bukhari and Muslim)

The male owner of a female slave has the right to have sexual intercourse with her as long as he, or the slave's previous owner, has not married her to another person. This is a right exclusive to the slave's owner. No one, including the owner's sons, may touch the woman unless the owner marries her to him. If the slave woman bears her owner a child, then her owner may never sell her and she automatically becomes a free woman upon his death, if he has not released her before that.

As can be seen from this evidence, slavery in Islam is far different from the institution of slavery as known in many non-Muslim countries.

# PUBLISHER'S NOTE

All praise and thanks belong to Allah alone, the One, the Almighty and All-Merciful. Blessings and peace be upon Prophet Muhammad, the last of His Messengers and Prophets, and upon his family, his Companions and all those who follow in his footsteps until the end of time.

The disunity and weakness of the Muslim Ummah is very disheartening, especially to the young generation. The situation, at times, feels rather hopeless. In this scenario, this book should come as a breath of fresh air — making one proud to be part of the Ummah.

The author has delved deep into Islamic history and presented various examples illustrating the superiority of the Islamic civilization when it was at the helm of world affairs, and its superiority over other societies, past and present. In the fields of science, technology, exploration, health, education and social welfare, Muslims were the pioneers of many initiatives. They were the ones who propagated oft-ignored principles of caring for the environment, racial equality and religious tolerance.

This book is intended to provide an encouraging insight into history and inform the readers that Islamic civilization has the potential to offer great things to this world yet again. May Allah accept the efforts of all those who contributed to the production of this book, and may it be acceptable to Him, *amen*.

Muhammad Abdul Mohsin Al-Tuwaijri

Managing Director

International Islamic Publishing House

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

# TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

We are living at a time when Western civilization is at its peak and Muslim nations are at their weakest point. They are dazzled by the power of the West with its wealth, scientific discoveries and technological advantages. Those who are unfamiliar with history might be unaware that this has not always been the case. A few hundred years ago, it was just the opposite. The Muslim *Ummah* (the global community of Muslims) was the superpower of the age; Muslims were leaders in culture, science and technology. The cities of the Muslim world were the centres of learning to which people came from far and wide, including, as in the case of Muslim Spain, from the lands of Christian Europe. Indeed, the West had to learn from the Muslims, and parts of their classical heritage were only preserved and made available through Arabic translations of Greek texts. In mathematics, medicine, astronomy and other fields, Muslims transmitted the knowledge of the ancients and augmented them with their own developments and discoveries. This knowledge, which the West learned and implemented from the Muslims, sparked the Renaissance and ushered in the modern age. The achievements of modern Western civilization may thus be traced to the Muslim world.

At one time, Muslims developed the most technologically advanced civilization on the earth. The uniqueness of their civilization lay in the fact that although they achieved a great deal

in materialistic terms, it remained a compassionate society, where the poor and disadvantaged were cared for. This was something which had never been witnessed in any other civilization. This care was arranged on the social level; it was not imposed or organised by the government. There were houses to accommodate those who could not afford them, similar to the public housing projects of today. There were religious endowments that helped people get married to ensure they were not lonely. There were religious endowments to feed the poor and provide milk and sugar water to mothers of small children. The sick were cared for in hospitals where medical treatment was available to all, free of charge. The disabled were cared for in homes and hospices, with people employed to help them get about and live a full life. Libraries opened their doors to all the seekers of knowledge, and education was freely available to all, not just the offspring of the 'privileged' classes.

This book is a reminder to the Muslims that they have a glorious past; for many centuries, they had the upper hand over their enemies. They became the masters of the world when they adhered to Islam; when they became preoccupied with worldly gain and pursuit of luxury, decline set in.

That promise still exists in the Qur'an:

﴿وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَىٰ لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُم مِّن بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا وَمَن كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾﴾

[سورة الشورى: ٥٥]

Allah has promised those who have believed among you and done righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession [to

authority] upon the earth just as He granted it to those before them and that He will surely establish for them [therein] their religion which He has preferred for them and that He will surely substitute for them, after their fear, security, [for] they worship Me, not associating anything with Me. But whoever disbelieves after that — then those are the defiantly disobedient.﴾ (*Qur'an* 24: 55)<sup>1</sup>

If Muslims adhere to Islam and take their religion seriously, they will once again be supported by Allah (*Subhânahu wa Ta'âlâ* — Glorified and Exalted is He) and lead the world in all spheres of life.

Nâsiruddîn al-Khaṭṭâb

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<sup>1</sup> The translations of the meanings of the Qur'anic verses in this book have been adapted from: Şaḥeeḥ International. *The Qur'an: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meaning*. Jeddah: Abul Qâsim Publishing House, 1997.

## PREFACE

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. Blessings and peace be upon our master, Muhammad (*ṣalla Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* — blessings and peace be upon him), who was sent as a mercy to the worlds, and upon his Companions and those who follow his guidance and preach his call until the Day of Judgement. O Allah (ﷻ), make us among those who call people towards goodness and the truth; make us steadfast in following Your straight path, the path of those on whom You have bestowed Your grace, not [the way] of those who have earned Your anger, or of those who have gone astray.

These chapters, which were written by our teacher Muṣṭafâ as-Sibâ’ee, speak of the marvels of our civilization and how wonderful it is to be connected to it. This book was published during the lifetime of our teacher (may Allah have mercy upon him).<sup>2</sup> He, himself, embarked upon a mission to introduce the book in order to explain why he wrote and published it.

At that time, copies of the book were given to a few students just before they graduated from university. This was to encourage them to strive hard and pray for steadfastness in adhering to the path. Yet, when those original readers came back and re-read the

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<sup>2</sup> The author (may Allah have mercy on him) died in 1964. The reader should note that this book was written more than fifty years ago; the descriptions of Western society refer to that time period and do not reflect changes that have taken place since then.



book, they thought they must write some comments, ideas and thoughts in the margins of the book.

This valuable book may not need those comments, apart from new examples and further evidence, as they would not add anything substantial to the book. However, the introduction and the first two chapters may require further explanation. Our teacher (may Allah have mercy upon him) spoke at length about the bankruptcy of Western civilization and his belief that Muslims can play the hoped-for role of a civilizing force. He also outlined the main features of an Islamic civilization, having discovered them through his extensive research and his brilliant and insightful analysis of civilization itself. This insight remained with him during his life, no matter what the situation, even though he expressed it in various ways in his sermons, articles, discussions, lectures and books. His book *'Udhama'una fit-Târeekh* (The Great Men of our History) was no more than the final version of his discussion of the wonders of our civilization and the brilliant face of Islamic civilization. This is apart from the fact that he was always pointing out, as we heard him say more than once, the importance of writing on these topics, and he promised to continue this work.

Professor as-Sibâ'ee said in his introduction to this book: "There is none who can play this role of leading civilization except one nation, which is our nation. No one will be able to carry the banner of tomorrow's civilization but us." He explained this by stating that we are the bearers of the most sublime belief: belief in *tawhîd* (the oneness of Allah: that He alone deserves to be worshipped and that He has no partners) that is not contaminated in any way. It is a belief that respects reason and moderate human attitudes, and our legislation is aimed at making things easy, seeking the best interests of humankind in every

matter. It also attempts to strike a balance between the individual and the society, and between the Ummah and humankind as a whole.

Next, he explained that this is because we have a positive and constructive spirituality; in the past, we have proven that we are capable of establishing such a civilization. We can also understand the reasons for the bankruptcy of Western civilization, which has fallen into the mire of self-interest and idolatry and has lost its proper outlook on the universe. For humankind, it has caused a strange division between this world and the hereafter, between intellect and emotion, and between religion and science. This has reached such an extent that European thought has found itself in a crisis because of this materialistic approach whereby science is held in high esteem and reason is sanctified, whereas other aspects of humanity are rejected and denied. Thus, the Westerner's thoughts and feelings are overwhelmed by pessimism; they are characterised by boredom, fragmentation, rebellion and loss, as referred to by our teacher. It may be possible to confirm this by referring to phenomena which have emerged in recent years, but it is enough for us to refer to the loss of the last drop of courage that is needed by the one attempting suicide. Today, a European individual seeks escape through evil actions, alcohol, drugs and promiscuity. When a society loses its strong foundation, namely its youth, to entertainment, drugs or the grave, this proves that it has lost all credibility. The state of decline that our teacher spoke of, when he mentioned the rate of suicide in a country like Sweden, for example, is now even worse.

This aspect has been mentioned only to affirm the Professor's point of view concerning the role of religious beliefs and positive spirituality in moulding civilizations, in contrast to the negative spirituality that still prevails in some lesser developed nations.

The fact that we are qualified to play this role in the world today is confirmed by European societies themselves. It is sufficient for us to quote the strong words spoken by the physician and philosopher, Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), who said:

What I would like people to discuss is the relationship between civilization and our outlook on the universe, which is a relationship to which no one pays any attention at present. The time in which we are living requires us to understand the importance of developing an outlook on the universe, for the prevalent idea nowadays is that humanity will continue to progress in a satisfactory manner with no need for any outlook or theory about the universe.

But in fact all human progress is dependent upon progress in the human outlook on the universe. By the same token, we find that every case of disintegration (of a society or civilization) is caused by a similar disintegration in the human outlook on the universe. The reason why we need a real civilization is connected to the reason why we need to have an outlook on the universe.

When we manage to form a strong and valuable outlook on the universe, in which we can find a strong and valuable belief, only then will we be able to create a new civilization.

He goes on to say:

Civilization simply means doing our utmost as human beings to perfect humankind and achieve progress, whatever it may be, within the circumstances of the world in which we live. This rational thinking requires two things: firstly we must be ready to work hard in this life and in this world, and secondly we must be ethical. We will never be able to do this unless we are able to give true meaning to this world and this life.

Then he speaks about how human beings lost every kind of outlook on the universe, after which he asks, “How have we ended up in this situation where we are lacking an outlook on the universe?”

He answers:

The reason is that the ethical, life-affirming outlook on the universe (in our civilization) had no basis in rational thought. For a long time we thought that we had found this basis, but it lost its impact without us even realizing until, a generation or more ago, we found ourselves forced to admit a total lack of any outlook on the universe.

Finally, he says:

The future of civilization depends on our overcoming the loss of meaning and the despair that have become distinguishing features of people’s thoughts and beliefs nowadays, and on our reaching a position of fresh hope and strong determination. We will not be able to do that unless the majority of people discover for themselves, deeply-rooted ethical principles that will affirm this world and this life, through a convincing outlook on the universe that is based on sound, rational thinking. Without this spiritual experience there is no way that we can keep our world from the collapse towards which it is headed.

What type of belief is the philosopher-doctor speaking about? What kind of view of the universe is he prophesying? He is describing a direction and setting guidelines for it; his description of the upcoming collapse due to lack of faith is sufficient for us. We can point towards our Islamic belief. The reader can study the description given in the author’s introduction to this book, where

it is summed up in a few words. One may also read the reasons which truly qualify Muslims to play this hoped-for role.

In the first chapter, continuing from the above discussion, Professor as-Sibâ'ee (may Allah have mercy on him) says:

There are those among our people who do not think much of our civilization when compared with the marvellous achievements of this modern civilization, with its inventions and conquests in the field of modern science. Even if that is the case, it is not right to think little of our civilization because of the two reasons mentioned above. These two reasons are very subtle and very clear. In the first case, a distinction is made between the two components of civilization, the spiritual/ethical and the material. After noting this distinction, there can be no doubt that each subsequent civilization supersedes the one that came before it in terms of material advancement. Nevertheless, regarding the spiritual and ethical elements of a civilization, which will be remembered forever and will play a role in bringing happiness to all people, no civilization, before or since, can surpass Islamic civilization with regard to the development of these components.

European civilization has surpassed Islamic civilization in terms of material progress because the current achievements of Europeans are the result of all the past civilizations put together, as some major Arab scholars have said, and scientific progress increases every day; if every generation started from scratch, there would never be any progress. The contrast between the first printing press ever made and the printing presses we see nowadays is far greater than the contrast between handwriting and the first printing press.

This is what was produced through the efforts and intelligence of ten generations. An ordinary person would not believe that the huge machines seen nowadays were created in one step.

In addition, no one can ignore the role played by Islamic civilization in the Middle Ages and the extent to which the Europeans benefited from its achievements. Our teacher stated this in the second chapter, and we will discuss this later. Still, a concern that will arise sooner or later is that the time during which Islamic civilization prevailed lasted longer than the period between the Renaissance of European civilization and the present. If this empirical method was invented by Islamic civilization and inherited from Islam by Europe, why do we not find any trace of it in the Islamic world as we see it in the industrialized societies of Europe? Their sons have walked on the moon and reached out as far as Mars. Where are the gas, steam, atoms and missiles in Islamic civilization?

The reason is not Muslims' methodology or lack of interest in discovering, inventing and making life materially easier for humans. The reason is neither the nature of Islam nor its beliefs, laws and way of life. Rather, the answer is that the Islamic world did not enjoy the right circumstances, internally or externally, to develop its science and knowledge as the European world did. From the outset, Muslims began, in a manner unprecedented in history, with a mission to liberate human beings from all forms of ignorance that had enslaved them. It is known that only a century after the death of the Prophet (ﷺ), the Muslim army had reached the valleys of France. [The Prophet (ﷺ) died in 632 CE, and the battle of the Field of Martyrs at Poitiers took place in 732 CE.]

The Muslim world was then forced to engage in a number of destructive wars. Hardly would one finish before another would

begin. Their primary mission was simply to survive, before they could even think about developing their science and knowledge. Although wars and crises should not necessarily affect the work of writers and scientists, the wars that the Muslim world had to fight were not the types of wars known to Europe during their scientific renaissance. Europe did not have to fight the Mongols and Tartars, for whom victory was measured by the amount of destruction they could inflict, the number of atrocities they could commit, the number of books they could burn and the number of colleges and schools they could destroy. At the end of the fourth century AH, scientific progress in the Islamic world had reached its peak, as explained by Professor Adam Metz in his book *The Renaissance of Islam*.<sup>3</sup> In the following century, the Islamic world had to contend with the destruction caused by the Crusades, which lasted for two centuries and from which Europe benefitted, as we shall discuss below and as Professor as-Sibâ'ee pointed out. Muslims finally emerged victorious in these wars, but this victory made them over-confident in ways which were ultimately extreme harmful at a time that coincided with the European world's reawakening.

After that, Baghdad fell at the hands of Hulagu in the middle of the seventh century AH.

It is important to note that in the wars of the Tartars and Mongols, the Islamic world bore the full brunt, protecting Europe from their onslaught at that time.

There are many other reasons, including economic and geographical reasons, the movement of European explorers and the tipping of the balance in favour of Europe. A brief mention of

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<sup>3</sup> Adam Metz, *The Renaissance of Islam* (London: Luzac and Co, 1937).

these factors will suffice here, while affirming the religious motives behind geographical exploration. These motives indicate the roles played by external factors in propelling Western civilization, which could only proceed through colonialism, never witnessed before in the Muslim world.

Ernest Barker, Professor of Political Science at Cambridge University, wrote an important piece about the Crusades and their ultimate effect of tipping the balance. He wrote:

Thus, we can see that all hopes in this project, which was aimed at converting the Mongols to Christianity in mass, thus uniting a Christian Asia with a Christian Europe in order to crush Islam, so that it would become a minor doctrine that was confined only to parts of Spain and some corners of the Mediterranean — faded away. In 1316 CE, the Mongol khans (chiefs) in Persia embraced Islam. In the mid fourteenth century, Islam spread widely in Central Asia. Between 1368 and 1370, the Chinese Ming dynasty closed the doors of China to foreigners, thus blocking the way for Christendom and paving the way for Islam which had reached a high position and had spread far under the auspices of the Ottoman Turks. But another hope rose in the minds of the west, and this new hope was enough to spark one of the most violent revolutions in history. The land route was now blocked, so why go by sea to the east in order to attack Islam and capture Constantinople from behind?

Barker continues:

This was the idea of the great mariners who used to wear the cross on their chests and who sincerely believed that they were doing this in order to regain the Holy Land.

Then he says:



If Columbus had been able to find the Caribbean Islands instead of Cathay, then we should truly be able to say that the Spanish who helped him had gained a new continent for Christendom and that the West had managed to tip the balance in its own favour in a manner that had never crossed anybody's mind...

Indeed, this is exactly what happened.

Irrespective of material advantage, the ethical and spiritual element in a civilization is the most important. It is the real element as compared to the material element. The level reached by the Islamic civilization in this regard and the role that it could play once again in today's world needs no explanation. The chapters of this book, especially those that deal with human inclinations, racial equality, kindness to animals and our war ethics, provide sufficient evidence.

Then again, the reader may think that our lecturer's emphasis on the ethical and spiritual element is a kind of consolation. The reader may also feel that the author is contenting himself with the Islamic beliefs and what we are capable of, despite Western material advancement.

This is an odd way of thinking and the last thing that may cross the minds of those from Western society who have started to sense the signs of decline in their own civilization. The first thing that crosses the minds of Muslims who are still dazzled, because of their lack of sense and their potential to be colonized, is the material achievements of that civilization.

In this context, in addition to what our teacher, as-Sibâ'ee, refers to and confirms, I would once more quote the subtle and eloquent words written by Schweitzer. He writes about giving precedence to the spiritual element, not only because he belongs

to Western civilization, but also because, while researching this topic, he used principles and logic that are available to everyone.

Schweitzer starts by saying:

We could define civilization, generally speaking, by saying that it is: the spiritual and material advancement of both individuals and societies.

Then he asks about the objectives of civilization and answers that one of them is to reduce the burden imposed on individuals and societies, the burdens of those struggling to survive. Schweitzer says:

The creation of opportunities in life for all, as much as possible, is something which must be sought for its own sake, and on the other hand, it is something that must be sought for the sake of achieving individual spiritual and ethical perfection. This is the ultimate goal of civilization.

Then he says:

The struggle to survive is twofold. Man must prove himself when working with nature or against it, and when working with his fellow-humans or against them. Reducing this burden of struggle is achieved by strengthening the power of reason in controlling Nature and human nature, and by making reason serve the desired goals.

Therefore civilization has a dual nature: it may be achieved first by making reason prevail over the forces of nature, and secondly by making it control human urges and inclinations.

This analysis of the dual nature of civilization is precise and clear; however, the important question related to our topic is: which of these two types of progress is real progress in terms of civilization? Schweitzer responds by saying that it is the second

type, even though it may be the least noticeable. He explains that the dominance of reason over nature does not imply pure progress; it simply means that progress has some negative aspects which may lead humans towards inhumanity. Therefore, reason must also prevail over the urges and inclinations of human beings. This is to ensure they do not misuse the power that they gain by the control of natural forces against one another “because that would put them in a situation where the struggle to survive would become more terrifying than it is among people who live a primitive life.” Consequently, the claim to be civilized cannot be true unless a clear distinction is made between what is essential to civilization and what is not.

Both types of progress can be considered spiritual, in the sense that they are both motivated by spiritual activity in humans. Yet we can also count humankind’s control of natural forces as material progress because we are controlling material things and thereby using them in the interests of humanity. Nonetheless, when reason prevails over human urges and inclinations, it becomes a spiritual action in a different sense. In this sense, it is the action of the spiritual on the spiritual or, in other words, it is part of our power of reasoning being used to control another part of our power of reasoning.

Finally, what is the point of reason controlling human urges and inclinations? Indeed, this is precisely the sort of control which represents true civilized progress or true civilization. Schweitzer says:

The point is that individuals, and societies alike, concentrate their will on achieving material and spiritual progress for all and for the individuals who make up the society. I mean that all their deeds are ethical. So ethical progress is the true essence of

civilization, and it has no other meaning. As for material progress, it is less important, and it may have good effects or bad on the development of civilization.

Now, at last, we come to the second chapter: the lasting impact of our civilization on history.

This chapter discusses the lasting effects of our civilization in five main fields: religion and belief; philosophy and science; language and literature; legislation; and the concept of the state and the relationship between the government and people. Perhaps the sequence of the fields was chosen by our teacher, especially since the effects of Islamic civilization on Europe or on the European Renaissance have been given the most attention in this chapter. The reason for this influence is that the stage of history that has followed the flourishing of Islamic civilization is the history of modern, contemporary Europe.

There has been a great deal of research in this area, demonstrated by the cited quotes and statistics. Many books have been written on this topic, but it is still open to further research. Instead of adding further comments to this topic, it would be better to discuss the principles on which these studies are based, regardless of their topics. This includes exploring the contact between Islamic and Western civilizations during the Middle Ages. In this context, it is important to explore these instances with the necessary care and focus.

The earliest of these occurrences and transfers of influence was the Crusades, which lasted for two centuries, from 490 AH/1097 CE until the last Crusader fortress fell into the hands of the Mamluks in 1291 CE. The Crusaders established kingdoms and mini-states along the coast of Palestine and Greater Syria and even

inland, including the principalities of Armenia, Edessa, Antioch, Tripoli and Jerusalem.

The Crusaders were the first and foremost fighters; indeed, they were promiscuous and barbaric warriors, as the great British historian Edward Gibbon has described them. Nevertheless, this did not prevent them from being influenced by the Islamic Arabic civilization, especially in the fields of military arts, architecture, agriculture, manufacturing and social life. They were inspired by the development and advancement in these fields in the Islamic world; this was highly unexpected both by their leaders as well as common folk.

At the same time, the Muslims did not expect to find them as they did, especially in the fields of ethics and medical knowledge [which become clearly manifest during times of war]. In the book *al-I'tibâr*, by the Syrian prince and knight 'Usâmah ibn Munqid, there is a great deal of evidence to support this claim. Consequently, it was very common for the Crusaders to imitate the Muslims, and not the other way round, as happened during the modern wars of colonialism because of different circumstances. The Crusaders imitated Muslims to such an extent that members of some societal classes made their wives and daughters veil their faces after reaching adolescence; they would not allow them to go out to the marketplaces with their hair uncovered. They certainly would not let them go out unless it was a necessity, such as going to a church or to the public baths. The Crusaders grew beards to imitate the Easterners; they also used slippers similar to the ones used by Muslims in their houses.

In general, the Crusaders returned to their countries after absorbing some of the habits and customs of the East. Their contact with the Muslims, as some researchers have said, caused the power of the Church to weaken and created a new focus in

Europe. It also dealt a severe blow to the feudal system. We have established that the contact between the Europeans and Muslims began in the latter's homelands; this contact lasted for almost two hundred years.

The second point of contact was in Sicily and southern Italy. The Muslims (the Aghlabids from Tunisia) crossed North Africa and advanced towards the island of Sicily which was then, in 212 AH/827 CE, under the dominion of Byzantium. Muslims captured Palermo in 831 CE and Messina in 842 CE. Finally, they took control of the entire island, with the surrender of Syracuse in 878 CE. They continued to rule the island despite attacks from outside until they were divided by tribal differences. Their division enabled the Normans, who had crossed the Strait of Messina in 1060 CE under the leadership of Roger, son of Tancred, to take over Palermo in 1072 CE, after a lengthy campaign. Subsequently, he was able to end Muslim rule over the island when he took over Noto in 484 AH/1092 CE. Roger I died in 1101 CE.

Islamic civilization flourished on this island as it had in Andalusia. Cultural exchanges between Muslims and Europeans reached a high level during the Islamic rule and continued even after that rule had come to an end. This exchange reached its peak, strange as that may seem to some, during the reign of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II (1194-1250 CE), who was very fond of the sciences that had been developed by the Muslims; he truly appreciated their value. The 'Sicilian letters' that were exchanged between Ibn Sab'een and him are a strong proof of this fact. It is reported that he was familiar with Arabic and would use it to address his guests. It was also said that he was one of the most outstanding men of his time in terms of knowledge, wisdom and political acumen. In that era, ties among North Africa, Sicily and Salerno were very strong.

It is also likely that he had access to all the works of Ibn Rushd only twenty-five years after the latter's death. Frederick II called together major translators, including one of the most prominent, Michel Scott (1235 CE), and organised works of translation. The Emperor Frederick II was keen to distribute his translations to the universities of Europe because of his great desire to spread knowledge. It also appears that he was distributing the translations to compete with the Pope.

The ambition of Frederick II seems to have been a continuation of the ambition of King Roger II before him, who had been content<sup>4</sup> to let Muslims remain in Sicily for more than half a century after the conquest, in order to benefit from their knowledge and civilization. In fact, he even invited Ash-Shareef al-Idreesi, author of *Nuzhat al-Mushtâq fi Ikhtirâq al-Afâq*, to come and write about the shape of the world. When al-Idreesi arrived, Frederick honoured him and showed him a great deal of respect, then asked him to stay with him to write the book himself, as opposed to sending him a copy written by a scribe. Ash-Shareef al-Idreesi agreed to his request. He would arrive on his mule, and as soon as he reached him, Frederick would make room for him on his throne. Al-Idreesi would refuse, and they would sit down together elsewhere.

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<sup>4</sup> The Italian historian Aldo Mieli writes: But if the reign of the Muslims was characterized by tolerance to a large extent, as was usual, the reign of the Normans was no less tolerant than that, contrary to the usual state of affairs in Christendom. These kings, during whose reign many of the local people under their rule continued to adhere to Islam, were great protectors of science, especially Roger II.

Then he says: This favourable state of affairs, which allowed civilization to flourish at its peak, continued under the reign of the great king and emperor Frederick II. (*Al-'Ilm 'inda al-'Arab wa Atharuhu fi Tatawwur al-'Ilm al-'Âlami*, p. 144 [Original title: *Panorama general de historia de la ciencia*]).

Ash-Shareef al-Idreesi did a great deal of research before he wrote his book *Nuzhat al-Mushtâq*, which was completed in 548 AH. The Russian Orientalist — or Arabist — Ignaty Krachkovsky commented on this work in his book *The History of Arabic Geographical Literature*:

Roger lived on the dividing line that separated the two global civilizations of that age, that being, Islamic and European civilizations, although to call what the Europeans had at that time a civilization is somewhat questionable.<sup>5</sup> So he had a sound knowledge of both civilizations. The fact that he appointed an Arab scholar to produce a description of the then known world, clearly indicates that Arab civilization was superior at that time and that everyone acknowledged this superiority. The Norman court in Sicily was half eastern, if not more than half.

Professor K. Young says of Sicily:

Sicily was a meeting place between the Greek, Latin and Berber Arabic languages and cultures, which led to the emergence of a different culture which — because of the support of Roger II and Frederick II — played a major role in transmitting the best of Islamic civilization to Europe via Italy. In the thirteenth century Palermo became like Toledo had been in the twelfth century, a great center for translation of Arabic books into Latin.

The third and most important point of contact, after the Crusades and before Palermo, was Andalusia or Muslim Spain. If we study the immense cultural influence of Andalusia on Christian Europe, we notice three points:

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<sup>5</sup> This idea is repeated several times throughout Krachkovsky's book.



First, this influence had no connection, at any point, to the military or political situation. The truth is, as some historians have suggested, that even when it was in a state of decline, Islamic Andalusia had a great effect on Christian Spain. Even after Spain and Portugal had gained power over Muslim Andalusia, they continued to benefit from the Islamic culture and transmitted the knowledge they had gained from it to different parts of Europe.

Indeed, this change in the balance of power, as we have noted, gave an opportunity of greater benefit and influence. For this reason, the city of Toledo was indisputably the greatest centre of learning from which the Islamic culture and 'Arabic science' were transmitted, as the Italian scholar Aldo Mieli believes, to the West because it was the first Andalusian city to fall into the hands of Alfonso VI, king of Castile, in 477 AH/1085 CE. This city did not lose its Arabic or Islamic character when it fell because the movement of scientific revival began in the court of Alfonso VI himself and continued during the reign of Alfonso VII.

The court of these kings was a centre of learning in which Muslim, Christian and Jewish scholars came together. The work of these scholars was focused on translating manuscripts from Arabic — the language of Islamic culture, knowledge and civilization — into Castilian Spanish followed by Latin. This was before Castilian Spanish became a scientific language that could be used to transfer scientific ideas in the same manner as Latin, which had not disappeared from Toledo even before it fell to the Christians. Arabic was used 'in official matters and on the lips of scholars', Mieli states.

Toledo was the greatest centre of translation in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, especially towards the end of the thirteenth century, when the throne of Spain was passed to Alfonso X (1284

CE), known as 'the scholar' or 'the wise'. He wanted to replace Latin with Castilian as the world language. He organised works of translation; moreover, he appointed revisers and checkers to supervise each group involved in this work. Indeed, this translation work attracted other European scholars, such as the Italian Girard Carioni, who went to Toledo and took special interest in scientific books, translating books on medicine, astronomy, chemistry and mathematics. There was also Juan de Salinas, whose interest lay in the philosophical aspects; he summarised some of the Arabic books in this field. We should not forget, either, the translations which were completed in Toledo during the twelfth century, in the area near Ibn Rushd when he was writing his commentaries and books in Seville and Cordoba. In addition, a school which was established in Toledo to teach Arabic and Hebrew had a graduate, a Dominican Ramon Martin (13<sup>th</sup> century CE), who was in contact with Thomas Aquinas.

Undoubtedly, the fact that Toledo remained like this for three centuries before the Muslims left Granada, their last stronghold in the Iberian Peninsula, played a decisive role in the transmission of Islamic knowledge and science, first to the Spanish and then to other Europeans. This is because during this time, Toledo was also a focal point, attracting researchers and students from all over Europe. From there, Islamic knowledge was transmitted to America, too. Ironically, the Spanish discovered the 'new' continent in 1492, which was also the year in which the Muslims were expelled from Granada. In our view, this is not one of those weird coincidences of history, as some researchers say. Rather, it was one of the unforeseen consequences of the conflicts of religion and civilization. The Catholic monarchs at the time, Ferdinand and Isabella, rulers of Aragon and Castile, were proud of causing the last Islamic fortress to fall and of their great

historical victory, and they were the only ones who agreed to help Christopher Columbus when all the other kings of Europe ignored him. Still, the great interest in translation is also proven by the fact that in 1316 CE, Ramon Lull established a chair for the study of foreign languages in a European university. Ramon Lull was also the first European, after the failure of the Crusades, to advocate sending missionaries instead of launching Crusades.

Many other Islamic centres in Europe were cut off by the wars, which the Spanish call the *Reconquista* (Recapturing); however, some centres of light remained in Europe. For example, even though the kingdom of Aragon seized control of Zaragoza in 1118 CE, Islamic civilization in the 'reconquered' land was not destroyed. It remained not only because of the benefits of culture and knowledge, but also because it was used as a means to understand Islamic culture during the long and bitter conflict that continued between them and the Muslims in other parts of the Iberian Peninsula.

Second, the cultural influence did not end with the fall of the last Islamic fortress in the Iberian Peninsula; instead, it continued for more than two centuries. The reason for this was the large number of Muslims who remained in the land despite the persecution and burnings inflicted upon them by the Catholic Church. According to some historians, many stayed because the Muslims were the ones doing most of the work in Spain in the fields of agriculture, industry and commerce. This prompted many Christian nobles and feudal lords to strive to keep their Muslim underlings by abolishing laws ordering the expulsion of Muslims from Spain. At the very least, they attempted to delay their implementation, especially after the elimination of wise men and scholars from the Muslim community.

The fact of the matter is that these Muslims, who are known in history as the *Moriscos*<sup>6</sup> or *Mudejares*,<sup>7</sup> were saved from execution and from the courts of the Spanish Inquisition because outwardly they appeared to be Christian, having given in to the reality of their situation. However, this outward display —

﴿... إِلَّا مَنْ أُكْرِهَ وَقَلْبُهُ مُطْمَئِنٌّ بِالْإِيمَانِ ...﴾ (سورة النحل: ١٠٦)

﴿...except for one who is forced [to renounce his religion] while his heart is secure in faith...﴾ (Quran 16: 106)

— and giving in to reality did not save them from the worst kinds of persecution. It was so bad that it is said that there has been no nation or people on the earth who have suffered and been tested like the Moriscos.

Whatever the case, they immersed themselves in the Spanish language and culture, while their real allegiance was to their Islamic religion and customs. They played their part, perhaps at the popular level this time, in the transmission of many of the fruits of their heritage to Spanish and European thought. The discovery of Morisco literature, written in Spanish using Arabic script, was one of the most important events in the nineteenth century for historians of Spanish literature.

Some Arabic researchers said that this was a new link in the strong chain that connects Arab thought, on the one hand, and Spanish and European thought on the other. It becomes even more important when it is seen as representing the last link at the time

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<sup>6</sup> Moriscos or 'Christian Moors': Muslims in Spain who were forcibly baptized.

<sup>7</sup> Mudejares: Muslims who made pacts with the Christians to remain in Spain and work for Christian nobles on their large country estates.

when European civilization was starting to reach maturity and perfection.

In these Moriscos, we see not only patience and the practice of jihad, but also hope and confidence in the victory of Islamic civilization and culture over the fanatical Spanish. Therefore, even though there is no documentation of the extent of their influence on Spanish culture, we can assume that their influence was substantial, even if we do not believe that it was greater than before. They contributed, or at least tried to contribute, to Spanish culture, after having experienced severe violence and bitterness. They attempted to bring it closer to Islamic culture and thought. Yet their situation, it seems, was known to the Catholic Church, which did not accept their outward conversion to Catholicism. Since the Catholic Church did not accept their conversion, the decision was taken to expel them, once and for all, in 1605 and 1614. In the latter year, or in 1612, approximately six hundred thousand were expelled. Most of them went to Morocco, where they spread out in the countryside and established the cities of Tetouan, Rabat, Salé and part of Fez. Many of them went and settled in Tlemcen, Algiers and Tunis, while others travelled towards the east [to Egypt and Syria].

The intervention of the Ottoman Sultan Ahmet at that time played a role in saving some of these Muslims; others had also been saved earlier.

Third, and finally, we can clearly see that the influence of Islamic civilization and culture on European countries continued for approximately nine centuries. Even though this influence was subject to the laws of the time and varied according to political and military circumstances, it remained active throughout those centuries. This evidence sufficiently proves all that on which Muslim and European scholars and historians agree.

The greatest and most important influence occurred in Toledo and all the cities of Andalusia; second to that is the influence that occurred in Palermo and Sicily. Finally, there is the influence of the Crusades.

Mieli wrote about the transmission of knowledge in the Iberian Peninsula, saying: "As for the Iberian Peninsula, the movement to transmit Arabic knowledge to the Christian world penetrated more deeply, was stronger and lasted longer than anywhere else, as there the developments occurred which were essential for the revival of knowledge in Europe."

Many European researchers have compared the influence of these three interactions. Most of them have reached the same conclusion as Mieli, although Hans Eberhard Mayer, author of *The Cultural History of the Crusades*, has attributed the development of Europe between 1100 and 1300 CE to the Crusades alone. This development paved the way for the Renaissance, the age of geographical exploration and the Reformation. However, according to Ernest Barker, Professor Emeritus of political science at Cambridge University and author of an important chapter on the Crusades, these wars should be regarded as one of a number of elements that contributed to this development. Although this view may be closer to the truth, it may be the case that the Crusades were no more than a warning; we may emphasise the importance of the events in Sicily and southern Spain.

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# INTRODUCTION

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. May the blessings of Allah (ﷻ) be upon the builder of the noblest civilization history has ever known, our Master Muhammad (ﷺ), and upon his family and Companions who built this great civilization with their blood and striving. Everyone who has enjoyed the blessings of this civilization owes a debt of immense gratitude to him until the Day of Judgement.

The current age<sup>8</sup> has surpassed all ages of the past in terms of material developments and scientific discoveries. Nevertheless, social scientists, psychologists and medical doctors in the West stand helpless in the face of a huge increase in the number of people suffering from nervous disorders. The entire world is enveloped in an atmosphere of anxiety and fear. This has increased so much that people — especially in the advanced countries — cannot even enjoy the life of ease and luxury that civilization has brought them.

It is worth pointing out that the problem of anxiety and stress gets worse as life becomes easier for people. The incidence of mental illness in countries with a high standard of living is greater than in more backward countries. This is clearly indicated by statistics for the United States.

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<sup>8</sup> The author, who died in 1964 (may Allah have mercy on him), was writing about the post-World War II era. (Editor)

It is significant in this context to note the high incidence of suicide among civilized people. It is strange that this happens in countries which are considered to enjoy the highest standards of living and of civilization, such as the Scandinavian countries.<sup>9</sup> Even stranger than that is the fact that people there commit suicide because they are bored with the life of luxury that they are living!

From this, we can see that anxiety, stress and moral deviance have reached such alarming levels that this is causing panic among parents in the West. It stems from modern Western civilization itself and from its prevailing philosophical bases.

Western civilization developed — as is well-known — as a result of Western contact with the Islamic civilization via the Arab institutions of learning in Andalusia and other Muslim regions. Greek philosophy was among the subjects studied by Muslim thinkers and philosophers. Hence, the Western scholars transmitted the philosophy and books of the Greeks from the Arabs under whom they studied. They devoted a great deal of effort to studying this philosophy despite the intense persecution of the Church early on. The minds of Westerners opened, and they began to see facts in a manner different from that which was propagated by the Church. There was a lengthy conflict between the Church and science, until science finally defeated the Church. This was after the torture, imprisonment, persecution and excommunication of the scientists and philosophers. The Renaissance flourished with two important characteristics: Greek philosophy with its materialistic and idolatrous character, and enmity towards religion, the clergy and the power of the Church. Under the influence of these two characteristics, the opinions of

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<sup>9</sup> And more recently, Japan. (Editor)



Western thinkers were formed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the various philosophical and moral trends that dominate Western minds to this day were developed.

The foundation on which modern Western civilization is built is materialistic, far removed from any spiritual or religious influence on the souls of individuals or societies. Religion continued to lose its influence over Westerners, little by little, until Westerners found themselves in this state of crisis and deep, overwhelming anxiety. Their thinkers and intellectuals now wish that they could make up for what they are lacking in spirituality; however, how can they do that when the tree has already borne fruit and sent down deep roots?

One of the characteristics of religion — whichever of the divinely revealed religions it is — is to give people some measure of peace of mind and spiritual comfort. It also aims to help them cope with the burdens of life and control their whims and desires. This is what Islam did when Arabic civilization was at its peak and at the point of greatest expansion; once we consider that, we will understand the misery that Western civilization inflicted upon its people when it shut religion — in the sense of the pure divine message — out of public life and reduced its effectiveness in generating hope, resolution, sacrifice and compassion in the hearts of individuals and societies.

We are not here to judge between Western civilization and the religion that it confronted and wrestled with from its beginning. Rather, it will be sufficient to point out the cause of Western civilization's inability to bring happiness and peace of mind to people. That is, it found itself forced to follow a course far removed from religion, which it opposed, thinking that it could walk alone with no need for any other religion to give life to its spirit or conscience.

The presence of renewed religious and moral activities in Western countries clearly indicates that people have started to think about benefiting from religion in order to reduce the harm caused by their civilization. We can be certain that the clergy, scholars of ethics and sociologists have lost control. It is now too late, and the crisis will deepen day by day, until this civilization inevitably meets its end.

One of the motives for the return to religion among Europeans, as a means of raising the spiritual awareness of the masses, is their fear of communism and its spread. However, because religion ended up weak, and because of the many doubts that resulted from the spread of the philosophy of Western civilization itself, religion has become incapable of resisting the current wave of communism in the West; it has no choice but to resist it by means of social and economic plans. A materialistic mentality such as that of the West cannot understand or accept anything from a different perspective.

In fact, communism itself is one of the deviant products of this civilization. It is one of the worst and most dangerous forms of Western civilization.

The [communist] philosophy of Marx and Engels emerged in the eighteenth century and made matters worse, creating a huge gulf between people and their own psychological or spiritual stability. This ideology took away people's belief in God and the last day, and it made them lose confidence in the moral and ethical values that had remained constant since the dawn of human history; societies have always sought protection and collective security in these very values. The first Communist state in the modern world was established, and it managed to improve the standard of living of its people as compared to what they had

endured before. However, it was not able — and a Communist state will never be able, with its materialistic philosophy — to save its people from all kinds of anxiety and fears, whether psychological or social. Indeed, it added even more fears to those because it caused its people to fear for their lives if they dared to criticise the regime or its methods. The fear that filled the hearts of Communist Party members themselves was far greater than the fear that filled the hearts of the ordinary citizens of the Communist state. This is because the Party members must be enthusiastic about the opinions of Party leaders and motivated to support them blindly, or else they will inevitably be liquidated.

By denying God and rejecting all forms of religion, the communist philosophy took away the last weapon that people possessed to fight fear, anxiety, calamity, selfishness and hostility. Communist states — no matter where they were — with their oppressive rule and bloody use of terror, made the masses under their rule like a flock of human sheep; these masses had no will to pursue the moral standards that all noble societies strive to achieve.

Thus, both branches of Western civilization — capitalist and communist — have taken away people's peace of mind, security and moral standards, replacing that ideal with materialism. If people cannot achieve that, they will live lives of misery, but if they do achieve it, they will live a life of boredom from which there is no escape except suicide!

Westerners soon began to realise that their civilization was spiritually and morally bankrupt; many of them began to turn towards the East, hoping to find in Eastern religions something to fill their spiritual vacuum and show them the way back to a noble humanity. It is little wonder that we see some of them —

especially in America — embracing Buddhism and Baha'ism. Those who embrace Islam, however, are of two types: those for whom Islam satisfies the hearts and intellects, and those for whom Islam satisfies the soul and conscience.

Professor Abu Bakr,<sup>10</sup> an English Muslim Orientalist, was a professor of English at Fu'ad University (now Cairo University) who had embraced Islam in Cairo and was working as head of the Oriental section of the British Library in London. One day, as he was explaining to me the reasons he had embraced Islam, he told me that this Western civilization had lost all honour and beauty.

I said to him, "There is no dispute that it has lost its honour, but as for it losing its beauty, how can that be when people see it as being the civilization that has paid the most attention to beauty: the beauty of nature, the beauty of clothing, the beauty of cities, the beauty of houses, and also the beauty of women?"

He replied, "But it has lost the beauty of spirit and the beauty of natural taste and the beauty of attitude."

In the summer of 1956, I gave a Friday sermon in the mosque of Paris. Among the topics I spoke about — on the occasion of the anniversary of the Prophet's birth — was the Islamic message of mercy and justice, and how that was manifested in the Islamic conquests and dealings with conquered peoples. I also alluded to the Algerian war and the bloody atrocities that had made it the greatest massacre in history. After the sermon was over, among the worshippers whom I met there was Mustafa Falsan. He was of

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<sup>10</sup> I am writing this introduction with no access to my journals, private papers or library, and I cannot remember his English name. He is well known to the professors of Cairo University. (It seems that the author is referring to Martin Lings — Editor.)

Romanian origin and had been the Romanian consul in Paris; he then embraced Islam and left his diplomatic career behind. Now he was leading a group of French youth who had embraced Islam out of conviction and sincerity, but who were keeping a low profile. They used to meet at his house once a week, wearing white Eastern-style garments. Some of them had let their beards grow, even though they were very young. They would read the Qur'an and study Islam together.

This shaykh, Mustafa Falsan, said to me, "I heard you speaking about mercy in the Islamic conquests. Perhaps you meant to deny the fabrications of the Westerners against Islam, whereby they accuse Islam of harshness and cruelty in its wars. Do not waste your energy on that, for every nation has characteristics by which it is known, and one of the main features of Westerners is hypocrisy in claiming to be merciful!"

One of the Arab Muslims was talking to a group of these French Muslim youth about the greatness of Islam and how Islam encourages development and progress. He got carried away, as if he was speaking in an Arab country that is striving for power and glory; he started to affirm that Islam calls for strength and the manufacture of tanks and airplanes, and so on. One of them said so him, "Brother, we have fled from Western civilization to Islam because it [Western civilization] shattered our nerves with its wars and weapons. It took away our humanity when it killed our spirits and awoke our desires with its materialistic nature. So tell us about the spirituality of Islam, in which we found our human dignity and peace of mind."

A Swiss girl, who was living in Paris and working as a specialist in mapping brain waves, told me, "I am a poor girl; what my family sends me is not enough to buy food in this commercial

city. Despite that, as you can see, it is an immoral city that makes people more like starving wild animals! I thought that I could work as a servant for some family to help secure a living for myself, so I looked for a position with an Eastern family in the hope that I might find a spiritual atmosphere that would preserve my dignity and humanity. I agreed to work for an Indian [Hindu] family for a certain number of hours each day, but I am sorry to say that I did not find what I was looking for.”

These are some examples of how Westerners have started to seek a spiritual life that will bring them comfort, after their materialistic civilization has filled their hearts and lives with pain, confusion and anxiety. You can see this if you speak to any Westerners who are balanced in their thinking and have any kind of spiritual and moral sense.

Western civilization represents the pinnacle of human achievements in purely material terms, but that is not the only thing that makes people happy, as we have seen. Inevitably, there will come a new civilization to continue this material progress and to lead humankind to a lofty spiritual life alongside that material achievement. Thus, there will be a constant balance between these two aspects of life: the material and the spiritual; neither will be allowed to prevail at the expense of the other. Is it possible for such a civilization to exist? Is there any nation that could play this role?

The Western world is unable to play the expected role because it is currently at the peak of its civilization, material strength and pride. When it collapses, it will have lost all the factors that qualify it to lead the world towards the sought-after security and dignity.

The communist world is even less qualified to play that role because of its greater emphasis on materialism and its war against

spirituality and religious and moral values. It will share with the West in increasing the world's woes and misery until this civilization collapses around its people in the West and in the East.

The Oriental world, with its idolatrous religions, will not be able to play this role. This is because civilization is based on knowledge, sound thinking and keeping away from myths and legends; idolatry, in and of itself, is the opposite of all that. The spirituality that the world needs in the hoped-for civilization is a positive and constructive spirituality that will feature in humankind's continued progress. Oriental idolatrous spirituality is a negative spirituality that seeks to escape life and avoid responsibility; it regards material development as something unclean, from which people must cleanse themselves and which is to be fought against.

There is none who can play this role of leading civilization except one nation, which is our nation. No one will be able to carry the banner of tomorrow's civilization but us, for the following reasons:

1 — We are the bearers of the most refined belief system that is known to any civilization. This is belief in tawḥeed, the purest and clearest form of monotheism. It is tawḥeed based on knowledge; it respects intellect and continually urges us to pursue the unknown and find out about it. It is a humane and moderate belief system, far removed from the extremes that emphasise mercy at the expense of justice or vice versa, or that emphasise love at the expense of duty or vice versa. It is a belief system based on laws that seek to make things easier, to attain people's best interests, to fulfil the individual's interests within the interests of the larger society, to ensure that the society's interests are met but not at the

expense of the individual's interests, to fulfil the interests of the Ummah within the framework of the international interests of humankind, and to fulfil the interests of humankind as a whole, without erasing the distinctive features of various nations and peoples and not at the expense of their dignity.

2 — We have positive, constructive spirituality, a spirituality that accompanies soldiers in the battle, workers in the factories, scholars in their research, philosophers in their studies, judges in the courts, employees in their offices and heads of state in their roles of leadership. It accompanies each of us at work and at play, in motion and at rest, night and day, in ease and in hardship, in sickness and in health. It does not make us focus on one thing and neglect another; rather, it makes us strive to attain perfection in all things. It reminds us of Allah (ﷻ) Who created us, of the earth on which we live, of the people with whom we live, of this world of which we are a part, and of the fact that we are all worshippers of Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.

3 — We have proven in the past that we are capable of building such a civilization. Whatever our opponents and detractors may say, no one can deny that it was more merciful towards people than modern Western civilization; it was more sublime in character, more just in its rulings, more noble of spirit, closer to the ideal to which human beings have aspired in all ages and in all stages of civilization. Because we were able to establish that brilliant, humane civilization during times of scientific and intellectual backwardness, we should be more able to establish such a civilization at a time of scientific progress in which new things are gradually being discovered in the universe.

When we seize the reins of the hoped-for civilization, we will not take the fact that humans have achieved space travel to mean



that there is no God; we will not use rockets and missiles that threaten other nations and peoples as a means of keeping them under our control. We will not use broadcast media as a means of misguiding people, cinema as a means of temptation or women as a means of physical enjoyment. We will not use the progress of our civilization as a means to abuse backward people, exploit their resources, or subject them to humiliation.

These are the reasons, or some of the reasons, why we are the only nation that deserves to carry the banner of civilization after the Westerners, to develop a new civilization that will reduce the misery of humankind and bring them a greater share of security, peace of mind and stability.

If we go back to the roots of our belief, we will find that our revealed book clearly points to the uniqueness of this nation and how it, among all the nations of earth, deserves to play the leading role that is needed by humankind in the modern age. This is not because we are distinct from others in racial, national or intellectual terms — Islam has never believed in such myths. The first and second reasons mentioned above are what make us different from others.

The verse from the Qur'an in which Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ  
وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَوْ ءَامَنَ أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ مِنْهُمْ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ  
وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ١١٠)

«You are the best nation produced [as an example] for humankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah. If only the People of the Scripture had believed, it would have been better for them. Among them are

believers, but most of them are defiantly disobedient.﴾

(Qur'an 3: 110)

— indicates that the characteristics of our belief system and morals qualify us to be the best nation ever raised up among humankind.

The verse in which Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿الَّذِينَ إِن مَّكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ۗ لِلَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ﴾ (سورة الحج: ٤١)

﴿[And they are] those who, if We give them authority in the land, establish prayer and give zakâh and enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong. And to Allah belongs the outcome of [all] matters.﴾ (Qur'an 22: 41)

— points to the characteristics of our civilization which make it the best civilization ever raised up for humankind.

The verse in which Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا ۚ وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَن يَتَّبِعَ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقِبَيْهِ ۚ وَإِن كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ ۚ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِلَّ عَمَّا يُهْتَدَىٰ بِهِ ۚ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ الرَّحِيمُ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٤٣)

﴿And thus we have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you. And We did not make the qiblah which you used to face except that We might make evident who would follow the Messenger from who would turn back on his heels. And indeed, it is difficult except for those whom Allah has guided. And never would Allah have caused you to lose your faith. Indeed Allah is, to the people, Kind and Merciful.﴾ (Qur'an 2: 143)

— places on our shoulders the responsibility to convey the message, carrying out the mission of leading humanity and showing them the path of truth and goodness for all time, not just in one era or generation.

We responded to the divine call once and took up the banner; we led humankind to security, guidance and light, then we gave it up and ran away from that mission. This verse is urging us to take up the banner and raise the torch once again so that we may save the people who today are lost in the darkness of fear, anxiety, whims and desires, wrongdoing and crushing despair, and who can find no other way out from that apart from suicide. Individuals commit suicide with weapons and lethal poisons, and groups of people commit suicide with atomic bombs and hydrogen bombs!

There are two kinds of people who will not take this idea of our leading a new civilization seriously.

The first type are those who have been enslaved by Western civilization, which has robbed them of confidence in their own Ummah's ability even to stand on an equal footing with the Westerners, let alone assume a position of leadership. Our Ummah has suffered a lot of problems because of these people and their spread of negative ideas. We praise Allah (ﷻ) that their numbers have started to shrink little by little. This is because they have seen the follies and crimes of this civilization against their own people and the oppressed people. Intellectual and political awareness have developed among our Ummah to a point where we may be optimistic about the outcome. Since we are no longer under the control of the colonialist West, the old-fashioned kind of political leaders who thought independence impossible have disappeared. By the same token, cultural enslavement to Western

civilization will also come to an end, and we will rid ourselves of those [colonial-era] leaders.

The second type are those who believe that the collapse of Western civilization is imminent after its evils have increased so greatly. However, they do not share our optimism that we will be able to play a leading role in the new civilization when we are in the state we are in, with such a huge gap between us and the nations who are ahead of us; they think that speaking in terms of leadership at this point is a kind of imagination swayed by emotion.

When we speak of this matter, we do not claim that the collapse of Western civilization and the transfer of leadership to our Ummah will be completed in ten years, twenty years, or even half a century. The rise and fall of civilizations occurs according to a natural cycle that does not vary. If defects appear in the foundations of a strong fortress, it may still appear quite strong for a long time, even though it is doomed to collapse and become a pile of rubble.

From the beginning of our renaissance, we have passed through a number of stages in a natural sequence. We awoke to the painful reality of colonialism, then we expelled the colonialists from some of our lands, and we will soon expel them from the rest. We began to learn how to organise our lives in accordance with the standards of modern civilization, which is the civilization that is prevalent. Then we started to gain power and make use of the resources of our own lands and started to do away, as much as possible, with the manufactured products of the West. The goal we are trying to achieve right now is to catch up with the civilized nations so that we will be similar to them in terms of power and standard of living. At this point, we should define for ourselves a

reference point, according to which we may set standards derived from our own civilization in the light of the problems of modern civilization and our own needs and circumstances. We should also define the next steps before the current stage comes to an end and decide whether to stay in the orbit of modern civilization, following in the footsteps of those who went before us hundreds of years ago, enduring the same struggles and devoting all our attention to catching up with them and becoming like them; or whether to define for ourselves another path to help us advance without going through the same difficulties and troubles as those faced by the civilized nations.

Realistically, we cannot — within the next few years — reach the same level of material strength as the Westerners have reached. It is not easy for us, within such a short period of time, to have satellites in space and missiles capable of crossing continents. Even if we supposed that we could achieve that in a few years, the West would have gone further ahead in these fields at the same time.

The correct way is to continue consolidating our strength as best we can, whilst setting new standards of civilization for ourselves and for humanity as a whole. We have the potential to be independent in choosing the right path for civilization, and we have enough time to study the fatal mistakes and problems, not for the sake of avoiding them at this stage, for that is impossible, but to avoid them and take a different course at a later stage. This is possible if we believe in our methods and standards, which have been proven through experience to be sound, and if we believe in the makers of civilization. They are our great people whose ambition has never died and who have never given up the struggle, those who never surrendered to the invaders despite the intensity of the persecution and repeated onslaughts and betrayals.

If we do that, we will have created the greatest turning point in human history in the modern age. If we gain spiritual and moral control over the two great continents of Asia and Africa, that will make their people happier, more secure and more peaceful than the inhabitants of other continents. At that point, the exhausted and lost Western world will have no choice but to turn to us for something to relieve its misery and pain. Then, leadership of civilization and the power to decide the course of history will be transferred to us before a few lunatics decide to put an end to the human race!

Maybe I am getting carried away with dreams, for the events of history do not happen in any organised fashion except in the minds of writers; who knows what will happen tomorrow? This world is full of surprises, and something may happen on one side of the earth that will affect those living on the opposite side. However, this does not mean that we should not think independently of our future. The events of history are wrought by the hand of Allah (ﷻ) through the views of thinkers and the calls of the prophets and reformers.

The subject matter of this book is based on some talks which I gave that were broadcast on Damascus Radio in 1375 AH/1955 CE, in which I gave examples of the marvellous aspects of our civilization. These are things that would still impress any fair-minded enquirer. I did not list all the marvellous aspects of our civilization, nor did I intend to analyse them in any systematic manner, because I was speaking to a mass audience whose levels of education and intellect varied widely. My main concern was that they should be heard by those (who listen to speech and follow the best of it). (*Qur'an* 37: 18), the best of our youth and intellectuals, who believe that we enjoy a dignified position before Allah (ﷻ) and in history. I did not have the time to continue these

radio talks because I was preparing to travel to some Western countries for the purpose of academic research in 1956. I wanted to speak of many things, including the examples of positive spirituality in the history of our civilization; those who had deep faith in Allah (ﷻ) and who adhered to the truth; those who had great ambitions, joyful souls, beauty of character, compassion towards people and justice in their rulings; those who also contributed to civilization and were involved in life, whether they were kings, scholars, ascetics, philosophers, commanders, rulers, merchants or workers, men or women, old or young, rich or poor. They were all examples of human perfection who lived not in the imaginations of philosophers and wise men but on the face of the earth, with the people of the earth.

This positive spirituality, as manifested in these brilliant examples, is one of the characteristics that distinguish our civilization from all other civilizations, ancient and modern. History has known many spiritual men from various nations, especially from the nations of the Far East. Nowadays, there are people who are inclined towards pure spirituality, but they are all passive with regard to civilization and think of themselves as being above contributing to civilization, preferring to live in their hermitages or on mountaintops or in caves and deserts. The spiritual examples of Islamic civilization, on the other hand, took part in the struggle to build life with all the work, effort and sacrifice that is required. This is the marvellous secret behind these wondrous spiritual examples in the history of civilization.

The aim now is to spread these talks further and draw attention to these wonders as evidence that we are able to build a better civilization, and to remind the new generation of our Ummah of their duty to build a noble, human civilization just as their forebears did. This is the best time for such a reminder, for our

Ummah is now re-entering the arena of history with all the motivation and energy to build a better future. The members of our Ummah still have some of the characteristics of their forebears, and if they hear the glorious stories of their civilization, they will be highly motivated to take action and work hard.

This discussion of our marvellous past is not intended to claim that everything in our civilization is bright and beautiful. No civilization in history is without its black spots. Rather, the point is to confirm that the eternal human aspects of our civilization are stronger and more beautiful than any negative aspects. Thus, we may refute the lies of those who attribute every kind of fault and shortcoming to our civilization and try to remove its name from the list of authentic civilizations. We seek to thwart the plots of those who are trying to divert the attention of our new generation from the marvellous legacy of our civilization; instead, we wish to invite their attention and attraction to a civilization whose lethal flaws have become all too clear. We want to clarify the history of nations for which, for every page of good characteristics, thousands of pages of shortcomings and immorality could be written. Distorting our history is the goal of colonialism, for which it is striving hard, and this is what its lackeys and proponents are doing by constantly glorifying its civilization.

If I have given some examples of the marvels of our civilization in this book, I hope that other researchers who study the history of our civilization will complete what I have started, describing the wonders of our civilization in a more complete and detailed manner. Thus, they would give the current generation a full picture of the marvels of the civilization which spread light and life during the Middle Ages. There is no future for a nation that is ignorant of its past, and no future for a nation that denies its characteristics and virtues at the time when those virtues and



characteristics are so strongly connected to the idea of civilization. If looking back at the past in order to weep is the attitude of the lazy, then ignoring it and despising it despite its abundant good is the attitude of the hate-filled and the ignorant. It is good for us to benefit from our treasures in building our renaissance, so that our renaissance will be secure, based on factors which will guarantee success, continuity and clear features aimed at dignity and tranquillity, with its glory connected to the glory of the past and of the future, so that its progress will continue and the circle will be completed.

We seek the pleasure of Allah (ﷻ), and He is the Source of strength.

Muṣṭafâ Ḥusni as-Sibâ'ee

# CHAPTER 1

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## THE UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF OUR CIVILIZATION

Some of the writers of the history of civilization have defined civilization itself as: a social system which helps human beings to increase their cultural output. A civilization consists of four main elements: economic resources, political systems, moral traditions, and science and arts. The development and progress of a civilization requires many factors, such as geographical and economic factors, along with psychological factors such as religion, language and education. Civilizations collapse because of factors that are contrary to those which lead to its rise and development. The most important destructive factors include moral and intellectual decadence, lawlessness, breakdown of social systems, spread of oppression and poverty, spread of pessimism and apathy, and lack of competent and sincere leaders. The story of civilization began when the humans first appeared. It is a long chain which one civilized nation passes on to the next. Civilization is not unique to any one land or race; it stems from the factors we have mentioned above. Almost every nation has

written some pages of the history of civilization, but what distinguishes one civilization from another is the strength of its foundation, its level of influence and the benefits that humanity may enjoy as a result of its rise. The more universal the message of a civilization, the more humane its inclination, the more moral its direction and the more realistic its principles, the greater will be its impact upon history, the longer it will endure and the more it will deserve to be honoured.

Our civilization is a link in the chain of human civilizations; some civilizations came before it, and others will follow it. There were multiple factors that contributed to the rise and decline of our civilization; however, this is not the topic under discussion. Before we examine the wonders of this civilization, we should discuss the serious role that it played in the history of human progress, along with its level of contribution in the fields of belief, science, ethics, rule, art and literature, and its lasting impact on humanity.

**The most important thing that attracts the attention of those who study our civilization is that it is distinguished by the following features:**

1 — It is based on the foundation of absolute oneness in belief. It was the first civilization that proclaimed the message of One God, Who has no partner or associate in His rule and dominion; He is the Only One Who is worshipped, and He is the Only One Who is sought.

(سورة الفاتحة: ٥)

﴿إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِثُ﴾

«You [Alone] we worship, and You [Alone] we ask for help [for each and everything].»

(Qur'an 1: 5)

He is the One Who honours and humiliates, Who gives and withholds; everything in the heavens and on the earth is subject to His dominion and held in His grasp.

This sublime understanding of the concept of oneness has a great effect in raising the level of humankind and liberating the masses from the oppression of kings, nobles, powerful men and the clergy; also, it has a key role in reforming the relationship between rulers and subjects and in guiding people to Allah (ﷻ) Alone, Who is the Creator of the universe and Lord of the worlds. This belief also had a great effect on Islamic civilization, which is virtually unique among all civilizations, before or since, as it is free from all forms of idolatry, whether in terms of literature or philosophy, in its beliefs, rule, art, poetry and literature. This is why Islamic civilization refrained from translating the Iliad and the 'best' of idolatrous Greek literature. It is also the reason Islamic civilization fell short in sculpture and image-making, despite its prominence in the arts of inscription, engraving and architectural adornment. Islam, which declared war on idolatry and its manifestations, did not permit any expressions or relics of idolatry from ancient times to exist in its civilization, such as the statues of great or righteous men, Prophets or conquerors. The reason statues are one of the most prominent features of ancient and modern civilizations is that none of them implemented belief in the oneness of Allah (ﷻ) as effectively as the Islamic civilization did.

This belief in oneness has had an impact on all the foundations and systems produced by our civilization. Thus, there is unity in its message, unity in its legislation, unity in its general aims, unity in humanity in general, and unity in the way of life and pattern of thinking. Researchers studying Islamic arts have noticed a unity

of style and expression in different kinds of art. For example, a piece of Andalusian ivory, a piece of Egyptian textile, a piece of Syrian pottery and a piece of Iranian metalwork, despite differences in their forms and ornamentation, have the same style and character.

2 — The next characteristic of our civilization is that it is human in its inclinations and objectives and universal in its ambition and message.

The Qur'an declared the equality of humankind, despite differences in their races, places of origin and lifestyles. Allah (ﷻ) has said:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ﴾  
(سورة الحجرات: ١٣)

«O humankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.»  
(Qur'an 49: 13)

When the Qur'an declared the universal equality of humankind with regard to truth, goodness and dignity, it enabled all those civilizations that believed in it to bring together the brilliant minds of all the nations and peoples under the banner of Islam. As a result, while every civilization may be able to boast about its brilliant sons of one nationality, only the Islamic civilization can boast about the brilliant minds from all nations and peoples who built it. Although Abu Ḥaneefah, Mâlik, ash-Shâfi'i, Aḥmad, al-Khaleel, Seebawayh, al-Kundi, al-Ghazâli, al-Farabi, and Ibn Rushd, for example, were all from different origins, they were among the brilliant minds through which Islamic civilization gave

humanity the marvellous intellectual products of sound human thought.

3 — Another characteristic of our civilization is the prominence it gave to moral principles in all its systems and fields of activity. It never abandoned these principles or used them to unfairly benefit a state, group or individual. In ruling, science, legislation, war, peace, economy and family, it paid attention to these moral principles in legislation and in the implementation of laws. In this area, it reached a high level that has never been attained by any civilization before or since. The Islamic civilization left behind a legacy in this area, for which it deserves to be admired alone among all civilizations. This characteristic guarantees the happiness of humanity in the purest sense, without any contamination of misery.

4 — The next characteristic is a belief in knowledge in the truest sense, based on belief in the purest principles. This is done by addressing the mind and the heart at the same time, appealing to emotions and rational thought simultaneously. This is an advantage that has not been shared by any other civilization in history. The reason this particular characteristic of our civilization is to be so admired is because it was able to establish a state system based on the principles of truth and justice as well as religion and belief, without religion becoming an obstacle to the development of the state or the progress of the civilization. Instead, religion was one of the greatest factors in its development. From the mosques of Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, Cordoba and Granada, the rays of knowledge shone into all parts of the world. Islamic civilization is the only one in which religion was not separated from the state, even though it was spared the misery that resulted from the inter-mixing of the two, as happened in Europe in the Middle Ages. The head of state was the caliph

and the leader of the believers (*Ameer al-Mu'mineen*), but he ruled in accordance with the truth; legislation was the domain of scholars who specialised in that field. Each group of scholars had its field of specialisation, and all of them were equal before law. Superiority was determined by one's level of piety and service to people:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «By Allah, if Fâtimah, daughter of Muhammad, stole, Muhammad would certainly cut off her hand.» (Bukhari and Muslim)

He also said: «The best of people are those who bring the most benefit to the rest of humankind.» (A reliable hadith recorded by Dâraqutni)

This is the religion upon which our civilization is based; there is no privilege given to a clergyman, noble person or rich individual.

(سورة الكهف: ١١٠)

﴿قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ ...﴾

«Say: I am only a man like you...»

(*Qur'an 18: 110*)

5 — The last of the unique characteristics of our civilization is an amazing level of religious tolerance which has never been witnessed in any other civilization that was based on religion. If people do not believe in any religion or any god, it is normal for them to regard all religions as equal and to treat fairly the followers of all religions. However, if they follow a religion and believe that their religion and belief is true and the best of beliefs, they will be willing to wield the sword and conquer cities, taking power and sitting in the position of a judge. Nevertheless, their belief and pride in their religion and belief should not cause them to be unfair in their judgements or to deviate from the path of justice or force people to follow their religion. It is rare to find

such individuals in history, and even rarer to find an entire civilization based on religion as the most tolerant, just, compassionate and humane civilization known to history. This is how our civilization was, and dozens of examples will be provided within the text. It is sufficient here to note that our civilization is unique in history because even though it was established by one religion, it was for all the religions.

These are some of the unique features of our civilization, in comparison to the history of other civilizations. It was rightfully admired by the whole world and loved by free and intelligent people of all races and religions. This admiration was during the time when it was strong: ruling, directing, educating and teaching people. When it collapsed and was succeeded by another civilization, the way in which people regarded it changed. Some began to take a dim view of it, while others still admired it. Some spoke about its virtues, while others went to extremes in criticising it.

Thus, the views of Western researchers differ concerning our civilization. They would not have done that if it was not for the fact that they, the ones who set the standards and whose opinions are followed, are in positions of power and are the guiding force behind civilization nowadays. On the other hand, those who are being judged, along with their civilization, are in a weak position; they are the ones whom the strong are planning to deprive of their resources and whose country they will rule over greedily. Perhaps this is the attitude of the strong towards the weak, whom they despise and belittle. This is what the strong have always done throughout history. We were different, however, when we were strong. We were fair towards people, strong and weak alike. We acknowledged virtue in Easterners and Westerners alike. Our



history of exemplary characteristics includes fairness in judgement, purity of intention and sincerity of conscience.

It is unfortunate that we did not really notice the bias of the strong against us or their unfairness in judging our civilization. Many of them were religious fanatics whose prejudice blinded their eyes to the truth; others were nationalist fanatics whose nationalistic pride made them reject the good of anyone who did not belong to their nation. However, what is our excuse for being influenced by their view of our civilization? Why do some of our own people look down upon a civilization in front of which the whole world bent down upon their knees for many centuries?

Perhaps the excuse of those who belittle the worth of our civilization is that it is insignificant when compared with the wonders, inventions and scientific marvels of modern civilization. Even if this were true, it does not justify belittling our civilization for the following two reasons:

1 — Every civilization consists of two elements: a) spiritual and ethical; b) material.

With regard to the material element, undoubtedly each civilization supersedes those which came before it. This is one of the laws that Allah (ﷻ) has decreed for the development of life. It is ridiculous to expect an earlier civilization to have reached the level of material development of a subsequent civilization. If that was acceptable, it would be also be acceptable for us to look down upon all the civilizations that came before our own. This would mainly be because of what our civilization has invented and its means and manifestations that were not known to any of the earlier ones. Consequently, material achievements of civilizations are a flawed yardstick for differentiating between them.

It is the spiritual and ethical element that makes civilizations endure, enabling them to bring happiness to humankind and saving it from fear and pain. Our civilization surpassed all previous and subsequent civilizations in this regard, and it reached a level that has never been matched in any age of history. This is enough to give our civilization a lasting impact.

The purpose of civilization is to enable humans to reach the highest degree of happiness. By doing so, our civilization has done what no other civilization in the East or in the West has managed to do.

2 — Civilizations are not measured by materialistic standards, quantities or land size, or by luxurious standards of living, food and clothing. Rather, they are measured by the impact they have on human history. The same applies when we speak of battles and kingdoms; they are not measured by the size of the battlefield or the numbers of soldiers. The decisive battles of ancient times or of the Middle Ages cannot be compared to the battles of the second World War. Although the number of soldiers and the means of fighting may appear insignificant, they are still regarded as important historical battles because of their far-reaching effects. The battle of Cannae, in which the famous Carthaginian general Hannibal defeated the Romans, is one of the battles that are studied in the military colleges of Europe to this day. The battles of Khâlid ibn al-Waleed (*raḍiya Allâhu ‘anhu* — may Allah be pleased with him), especially his conquest of Syria, are still studied and admired by Western military experts. For us, they are golden pages in the history of military conquest in our civilization. The fact that the battles of Cannae, Badr, al-Qâdisiyah and Hittin happened a long time ago does not erase the fact that they were decisive, historical battles.

I believe I have made the point I wanted, concerning the study of our civilization. However, if I have not covered this topic in the manner I wanted, then, at least, in the following discussion I will give examples of the wonders of our civilization. Through them, I will prove the lasting effects of the civilization which this Ummah has built and which the Most Just of judges and the Most Truthful of speakers has described as being:

﴿ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ ... ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ١١٠)

﴿...the best nation produced [as an example] for humankind...﴾  
(*Qur'an* 3: 110)

## CHAPTER 2

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# THE IMPACT OF OUR CIVILIZATION ON HISTORY

In the previous chapter, we discussed the prominent features of our civilization. We stated that its impact can be measured only by the effect it has had on the history of humankind in the intellectual, ethical and material fields. We also asserted that our civilization has played a major role in the history of human progress. It has had a great impact in the fields of religious belief, science, governance, philosophy, art, literature and so forth; it has also influenced subsequent achievements of modern civilization. So what were these effects, and how important are they?

We can sum up the lasting legacy of our civilization under five main headings:

1 — **The field of religious belief:** the principles of Islamic civilization had a great impact on the religious reform movements which appeared in Europe from the seventh century until the age of the modern Renaissance. Islam affirms God's oneness and His being the only Sovereign, without any physical attributes. He

neither commits injustice nor has any other shortcomings. Islam declares humanity's direct relationship with God, without any need for intercessors regarding worship and comprehension of Islam's laws. This was a major factor in opening people's minds to these astounding principles. At that time, people were suffering from violent sectarian disputes; their thoughts, opinions, wealth and labour were submissive to the clergymen. Therefore, it was only natural that when Islamic conquests spread to the east and the west, neighbouring nations were influenced by its principles of belief, above all else.

This is undoubtedly what happened. In the seventh century CE, some Westerners denounced the worship of images. Then came those who denounced the idea of having any intermediary between God and His worshippers and who called for an independent understanding of the Bible, without the authority and supervision of the clergy. Many researchers have confirmed that in his Reformation movement, [Martin] Luther was influenced by the philosophy of the Arabs and Muslim scholars, along with their views on religion, doctrine and revelation. During this time, European universities still depended upon the books of Muslim philosophers that had been translated into Latin long before. It is certain that the movement to separate church and the state, which was proclaimed during the French Revolution, stemmed from the violent intellectual movements which had dominated Europe for three centuries or more; they were also caused by our interaction with them through the Crusades and in Andalusia.

2 — **The field of philosophy and science:** including medicine, mathematics, chemistry, geography and astronomy. Europe was awakened by the voices of our scholars and philosophers who taught these sciences in the mosques of Seville, Cordoba, Granada and elsewhere. The first Westerners to come to our schools were

very impressed and elated by what they heard about these sciences in an atmosphere of independence that was unknown in their countries. Our scholars were speaking about the earth: its rotation and spherical shape. They were discussing the movements of stars and heavenly bodies in their study circles and books. On the other hand, the minds of the Europeans were filled with myths and stories about all these matters. Then the Europeans started to translate works from Arabic to Latin; books of our scholars were studied in the Western universities. Ibn Sina's (Avicenna's) book on medicine, *al-Qânoon*, was translated in the twelfth century. Ar-Râzi's (Rhases or Rhazes) book *al-Hâwi*, which was larger and more comprehensive than *al-Qânoon*, was translated towards the end of the thirteenth century. These two books remained the basis of teaching medicine in the universities of Europe until the sixteenth century, and the books of philosophy continued to be the main references for much longer. Furthermore, the West only learned about Greek philosophy through our writers and translators.

As a result, many fair-minded Europeans acknowledge that during the Middle Ages, we were the teachers of Europe for no less than six hundred years. The scholar Gustave LeBon has said:

The translations of the books of the Arabs, especially scientific books, remained practically the only source of teaching in the universities of Europe for five or six centuries. It can be said that the Arab influence on some sciences, such as medicine, has lasted to this day. The reason being is that the book of Ibn Sina was still being expounded in Montpellier at the end of the last century.

This scholar also says: Roger Bacon, Leonard of Pisa, Arnaud de Villeneuve, Ramon Lull, Saint Thomas, Albertus Magnus and

the Spaniard Alfonso the Tenth all relied solely on the books of the Arabs.

Monsieur Renan says: Albertus Magnus was indebted to Ibn Sina; Saint Thomas was indebted to the philosophy of Ibn Rushd (Averroes).

The Orientalist scholar, Sideo, wrote:

The Arabs alone carried the banner of civilization in the Middle Ages, and they defeated the barbarism of Europe, which had been shaken by the incursions of the northern tribes. The Arabs drank from the enduring spring of Greek philosophy and, not content with what they had discovered of the Greek legacy, went on to expand it and add new topics to the study of nature.

He also said: When the Arabs practiced astronomy, they paid a great deal of attention to all the mathematical sciences, so they became proficient masters and were truly our teachers in this field.

He also said: When we study what the Latins took from the Arabs in the beginning, we find that Gerbert, who became pope and took the name Sylvester II, introduced to us between the years 970 and 980 what he had learned of mathematics in Andalusia; Athelhard the Englishman travelled in Andalusia and Egypt from 1100 to 1128 and translated from Arabic the *Elements of Euclid*, a work which had been unknown in the West; Plato of Tivoli translated from Arabic the *Spherics* of Theodosius; Rudolf of Perugia translated from Arabic *The Geography of the Known World* by Ptolemy; Leonard of Pisa wrote around 1200 essays on Algebra, which he had learned from the Arabs; Kanianus of Navarro translated from Arabic ten books of Euclid in the thirteenth century, a good translation with commentary; Pole Witelo (Vitellius) translated *al-Basariyât* by al-Hasan ibn al-

Haytham (Alhazen) in the same century; Gerhard of Cremona spread knowledge of sound and correct astronomy in the same century with his translation of *Almagest* by Ptolemy and the commentary by Jâbir (Geber), etc. In 1250 CE, the Spaniard Alfonso ordered the publication of the astronomical tables that bear his name. Roger I encouraged the acquisition of Arabic science in Sicily, especially the books of al-Idreesi, and the emperor Frederick II was no less keen to encourage study of the science and literature of the Arabs. The sons of Ibn Rushd lived in the court of this emperor and taught him the history of plants and animals.

Homeld says in his book on the universe:

It was the Arabs who for the first time invented the method of chemical preparation of medicines, and it was from this source that sound advice and the procedure of experiments came to us, which were taken up by the School of Saliram and from there after a long time spread to southern Europe. The medicine and the natural elements on which medication entirely depends became the cause of study of plants' chemistry. In this way both these studies went on simultaneously in two different ways and thus the door on a new era of the study of this science was opened by the Arabs. Suffice it for the proof of the vast Arab knowledge of the plant kingdom that they made addition of two thousand herbs to those of Zulefuredas. There were many herbs in their pharmacy that the Greeks had not even dreamt of.

Sideo says that because of their books, ar-Râzi and Ibn Sina dominated the schools of the West for a long time. Ibn Sina was known as a doctor in Europe; he held absolute sway over their schools for approximately six centuries. His book *al-Qânoon*,



which includes five sections, was translated and printed a number of times because it formed the basis for study in the universities of France and Italy.

3 — **The field of language and literature.** Westerners, especially the poets of Spain, were greatly influenced by Arabic literature. The literature of chivalry, knighthood, metaphor and extraordinary imaginary tales entered Western literature through Arabic literature in Andalusia, in particular.

The famous Spanish writer Albaniz said: “Europe knew nothing of chivalry and its literature before the Arabs came to Andalusia and their knights and heroes spread throughout the regions of the south.”

The extent to which Western writers were influenced by Arabic and its literature can be gauged by Dozy’s quote in his book on Islam. He quoted the words of Spanish writer Alghero, who deeply regretted the neglect of Latin and Greek and the acceptance of the language of the Muslims.

He said: The intelligent and eloquent people are bewitched by the sound of Arabic and they look down on Latin. They have started to write in the language of those who defeated them.

His contemporary, who was more influenced by nationalistic feelings, expressed his bitterness when he said:

My Christian brothers admire the poetry and stories of the Arabs, and they study the books written by the philosophers and scholars of the Muslims. They do not do that in order to refute them, but rather to learn the eloquent Arabic style. Where today, apart from the clergy, are those who read the religious commentaries on the Old and New Testaments? Where are those who read the Gospels and the words of the Prophets?

Alas, the new generation of intelligent Christians do not know any literature and language well, apart from Arabic literature and Arabic language. They avidly read the books of the Arabs and amass huge libraries containing these books at great expense. They look upon these Arabic treasures with great pride, at a time when they refrain from reading Christian books on the basis that they are not worth their time. How unfortunate it is that the Christians have forgotten their language, and nowadays you cannot find among them one in a thousand who could write a letter to a friend (in his own language). Yet, with regard to the language of the Arabs, how many there are who express themselves fluently in it with the most eloquent style, and they write poetry that surpasses the poetry of the Arabs themselves in its eloquence and correct usage.

There is no doubt about the influence of Arabic literature on the stories and writings of Europe's brilliant writers in the fourteenth century and thereafter. In 1349, Boccaccio wrote stories called *The Decameron*, which were an imitation of the *Arabian Nights* (*One Thousand and One Nights*). Shakespeare was also inspired by them to write his play, *All's Well that Ends Well*, and the German playwright Lessing was also inspired by the same stories in writing his play, *Nathan the Wise*. Chaucer, the foremost English poet, borrowed the most from Boccaccio in his own lifetime. He had met him in Italy, after which he wrote his famous collection known as *The Canterbury Tales*.

With regard to Dante, many critics affirm that in *The Divine Comedy*, in which he describes his journey to the other world, he was influenced by *Risâlât al-Ghufrân* (*Message of Forgiveness*) by al-Ma'arri and *Wasf al-Jannah* (*Description of Paradise*) by Ibn 'Arabi. That was because he lived in Sicily during the time of the emperor Frederick II, who was fond of the Islamic culture and

of studying it from its Arabic sources. There were debates between him and Dante concerning the views of Aristotle, some of which were only known through Arabic sources. Dante also knew a considerable amount of biography of the Prophet (ﷺ); he had read the account of the Prophet's night journey and ascension, and the description of heaven in the latter.

Petrarch lived during the time of Arabic culture in Italy and France. He studied at the universities of Montpellier and Paris. Both of them had based their syllabus on the books of the Arabs and their students in the universities of Andalusia.

The development of the European art of storytelling was influenced by the similar art of the Arabs in the Middle Ages. It comprised the *maqâmât* (a genre of Arabic rhythmic prose) and tales of chivalry and knightly adventure for the sake of glory and love. After *Arabian Nights* was translated into European languages in the twelfth century, it had a great impact in this field. From that time until the present, it has been published in more than three hundred editions in all the languages of Europe. A number of European critics think that Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* are indebted to *Arabian Nights* and to the letter from Hay ibn Yaqzân to the Arab philosopher Ibn Ṭufayl.

Without a doubt, the large number of editions of *Arabian Nights* is indicative of Westerners' love for this book and therefore of its influence on them.

It is well-known that many Arabic words, related to various aspects of life, entered different European languages, and their pronunciation is close to the Arabic pronunciation. Some examples are: cotton, silk, musk, syrup, jar, lemon, zero, and countless others.

It is sufficient for us here to note the words of Professor Mikhail:

Europe is indebted, in its storytelling literature, to the Arab lands and to the Arab peoples living in the Syrian plateau. It is indebted, for the greater part or primarily, to those active forces which made the Middle Ages in Europe different in spirit and imagination.

4 — **The field of legislation.** The contact between European students and the Islamic schools in Andalusia and elsewhere had a great impact in transmitting a number of legislative and juristic rulings into their languages. At that time, Europe had no proper justice system and no just laws. It was not until Napoleon's time in Egypt that the most famous books of Mâliki *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) were translated into French. Foremost among these books was *Kitâb Khalel* (the Book of Khalel), which formed the core of French civil law; to a large extent, it was similar to the rulings of Mâliki *fiqh*.

The scholar Sideo said: The Mâliki *madh-hab* (school of juristic thought) is the one which attracts our attention, especially because of its connection to the Arabs of Africa. The French government delegated Dr. Beron to translate into French the book called *al-Mukhtasar fil-Fiqh* (*The Comprehensive Fiqh Book*) by al-Khaleel ibn Is-hâq ibn Ya'qoob (d. 1422 CE).

5 — **The concept of the state and the relationship between the people and the government.** In the ancient and medieval worlds, people's right to supervise the actions of their rulers was denied. The relationship between people and their ruler was that of a slave and a master. The ruler was the absolute master, who did whatever he wanted. He could treat people as he wished. The kingdom was

regarded as the personal property of the king and was inherited from him like the rest of his wealth. Because of this, they believed it was permissible to wage war against another state to demand a prince's right to the throne or because of a dispute concerning a son-in-law's inheritance.

As for the relationship between warring countries, it was usually one of violating the sanctity of everything owned by the defeated party: wealth, honour, freedom and dignity. This is how things remained until the emergence of the Islamic civilization which proclaimed one of its basic principles. It declared that citizens had the right to supervise the activities of their rulers; these rulers were no more than hired workers who were expected to work hard in taking care of people's interests with honesty and integrity. Hence, for the first time in history, individuals were able to call their rulers to account for what they were wearing and from where it had been purchased. In response, no one could sentence them to execution, imprisonment or expulsion. Instead, the ruler had to come, explain himself and convince the objecting individual. In addition, for the first time in history, one of the people said to the supreme ruler: "Peace be upon you, O hired worker," and the ruler acknowledged that he was the people's hired worker; he was responsible for providing sincere service and fulfilling the trust, just as a hired worker.

This was one of the standards that the Islamic civilization proclaimed and implemented. It was like a breeze of freedom and awareness blowing among the societies neighbouring the Islamic civilization. They first complained, then stirred, and finally revolted and liberated themselves. This is what happened in Europe, after Westerners came to Syria during the Crusades. Previously, in the Andalusian caliphate, they had witnessed that

people kept a watchful eye on their rulers, who were not under the supervision of anyone except their own people. The kings of Europe compared themselves to the Arab and Muslim kings, who were not subject to the influence of any particular class. They, on the other hand, had to share authority with Rome, and the threat of excommunication was always present unless they obeyed the religious king of Rome [the Pope]. After returning to their countries, they rebelled until they freed themselves; then their own people rebelled against them until they gained independence. After this, the French Revolution did not pursue any other freedoms, stopping at the ones our civilization had proclaimed twelve centuries earlier.

Some of the principles that our civilization followed in its wars were: respecting treaties, respecting freedom of belief, leaving places of worship for their worshippers, and guaranteeing the freedom and dignity of people. This generated a spirit of pride and dignity in the conquered people and made them realise their own worth.

For the first time in history, a father from the conquered people complained to the supreme ruler of the state that the son of the governor had hit this man's son twice with a whip on the head, for no reason. The supreme ruler of the state got angry and called the governor to account. He passed judgement that the injured party be given the right to retaliate. Also, he rebuked the governor, saying: "When did you start enslaving people who were born free?" This was a new spirit which was awakened by our civilization among individuals and people. Before our rule and civilization, a father who complained about his son being hit would have been humiliated and beaten. His wealth would have been confiscated, and he would have been persecuted for his beliefs. He could not have revolted or expressed his pain or felt

any sense of pride and dignity; this was until the sun of our civilization rose on him. Then he could raise his voice and say to Ameer al-Mu'mineen: "I seek refuge in Allah and in you from oppression." The oppression of which he was complaining was not the shedding of blood or the violation of honour; it was not religious persecution or the confiscation of land; rather, it comprised two blows to one small child.

The Westerners made contact with our civilization in the Middle Ages in both Syria and Andalusia. Before this, they had never known of a king revolting against a pope, or a people rising up against a king. They never thought that they had the right to call a ruler to account or to support the one who was oppressed. When one differed with another, concerning some matter of doctrine or sect, they would slaughter one another like butchers slaughter sheep. However, when they interacted with us, their Renaissance and revolution began; they freed themselves. After this, can anyone deny the effect of our civilization in freeing the world and saving people?

\* \* \*

These are some of the lasting effects of our civilization in five important fields; these fields are some of the most prominent features of life among nations and civilizations. For this reason, the people who were liberated by our civilization are indebted to us. We have to realise this, not for false pride or wishful thinking, but to ensure that we know who we are and appreciate the value of our civilization and heritage. In doing so, we should also realise that we deserve to be the just (and the best) nation, witnesses over humankind, leading them towards goodness, truth and dignity.

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## CHAPTER 3

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### OUR HUMANE TENDENCY

Any researcher who studies our civilization and its impact cannot help but notice the humane tendency which distinguishes our civilization from all others. It brought humankind from an atmosphere of rancour, hatred, division and prejudice into an atmosphere of love, tolerance, cooperation and equality before Allah (ﷻ) and before the law. It created a society in which everyone was equal; there was no room for one race or group to claim superiority over another. This humane tendency is manifested in the principles and laws of our civilization and in its day-to-day life.

The humane tendency in its principles can be seen in the fact that Islam declares all people to have been created from a single soul:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً...﴾ (سورة النساء: ١)

«O humankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women...»

(Qur'an 4: 1)



The origin of all humankind is one and the same, regardless of how much they are split into nations, tribes, countries and races. It is simply like the division within a family: sons and daughters from one father and one mother. This being the case, differences in race and country of origin should lead individuals towards cooperation and getting to know one another in amiable ways. Thereby, the eternal human principle emerges:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا<sup>١٣</sup>

(سورة الحُجرات: ١٣)



﴿O humankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another...﴾

(*Qur'an* 49: 13)

Some individuals may achieve a high rank in this life while others remain low; some groups may be rich while others are poor; some may rule while others are subjugated; and some may be fair-skinned while others are dark-skinned.

This is the way of the world, and indeed, it is a system that never changes. However, that does not mean that those who are in higher positions should discriminate against those who are beneath them, that the rich should discriminate against the poor, that rulers should discriminate against their subjects, or that the fair-skinned should discriminate against the dark-skinned. Rather, they all are equal. They are all equal before Allah (ﷻ) in their humanity, and none of them is superior except in terms of piety:

﴿... إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ<sup>١٤</sup> ...﴾

(سورة الحُجرات: ١٣)



﴿...Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you...﴾

(*Qur'an* 49: 13)

They are also equal before the law, to which they must submit equally; no distinctions are made except on the basis of truth.

﴿فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ ﴿٧﴾ وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ ﴿٨﴾﴾  
(سورة الزلزلة : ٧-٨)

«So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.» (Qur'an 99: 7-8)

They are equal within the framework of society; the strong can be influenced by the weak, and all of them may be influenced by the actions of a few.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «The likeness of the believers in their mutual love and compassion is that of a single body. If one part of it suffers, the rest of the body will join it in fever and staying awake.» (Muslim and Ahmad)

Therefore, Islam has continued to proclaim the unity of humankind, like siblings from one father and mother. Social unity in the community is like a tree whose branches bend in the wind, with no difference between the upper and lower branches. It is useful here to note that the Qur'an frequently addresses humankind in words that make them feel that they have a common human origin: «O humankind...», «O children of Adam...».

Also, it addresses the followers of the single religion by saying: «O believers...»

— without addressing its words to any one nation or group.

The humane tendency in the laws of our civilization can clearly be seen in any aspect of its legislation. During prayer, people stand together before Allah (ﷻ), without allocating any special place to a king, prominent person or scholar. While fasting, all people feel the same hunger, with no favours shown to a ruler or to

the rich or noble. During *Hajj* (the major pilgrimage to Makkah), people wear the same clothes, stand in the same places and perform the same rituals. No distinction is made between the one who has come from afar and the one who lives locally, between the strong and the weak, between nobility and common folk.

If we move on to the issue of civil law, we will see that truth is the foundation of laws that regulate relationships between people, with justice as their main purpose. Warding off wrong is the banner which is carried by the law, so that everyone who is persecuted and oppressed can avail it. In the area of criminal law, we note that the punishment is the same irrespective of who has committed the crime. Whoever murders has to be killed, whoever steals has to be punished, and whoever transgresses has to be disciplined. It makes no difference whether the murderer is knowledgeable or uneducated, or whether the victim was a prince or a peasant. It makes no difference whether the transgressor was Ameer al-Mu'mineen or a weaver of cloth. It also does not matter if the one whose rights were transgressed was a non-Arab or an Arab, an Easterner or a Westerner. All of them are equal before the law.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِصَاصُ فِي الْقَتْلِ الْحُرُّ بِالْحُرِّ وَالْعَبْدُ بِالْعَبْدِ وَالْأُنْثَىٰ بِالْأُنْثَىٰ...﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٧٨)

﴿O you who have believed, prescribed for you is legal retribution for those murdered — the free for the free, the slave for the slave, and the female for the female...﴾ (Qur'an 2: 178)

The *Sharia* (Islamic law derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah) attained an even higher level than this when it affirmed the human dignity of all people regardless of their religion, race or colour. Allah (ﷻ) has said:

(سورة الإسراء : ٧٠)

﴿وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ...﴾

﴿And We have certainly honoured the children of Adam...﴾

(Qur'an 17: 70)

This dignity guarantees the rights of life, freedom of belief, and education to all people. One of the duties of the state is to guarantee these rights to all people on an equal footing, without any exceptions. However, the Sharia goes even further than that, to the sublime and humane level that determines reward and punishment for people, not on the basis of their outward deeds, but on the basis of their intentions.

The Prophet (ﷺ) confirmed: «Allah does not look at your outward appearance; He looks at your hearts.» (Muslim)

People will be rewarded or punished based only on their intention. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Actions are only through intentions, and each person shall have that which he or she intended.» (Bukhari and others)

The intention which is acceptable to Allah (ﷻ) is the good intention that benefits people and pleases Him, with no materialistic purpose or gain.

﴿... وَاعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ وَأَفْعَلُوا الْخَيْرَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ﴾

(سورة الحج : ٧٧)

﴿... worship your Lord and do good — that you may succeed.﴾

(Qur'an 22: 77)

If you do a good deed for the sake of Allah (ﷻ), you should not expect any favour in return from the recipient of your good deed.

﴿وَيُطْعَمُونَ الْطَّعَامَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا ﴿٨﴾ إِنَّمَا نَطْعِمُكُمْ لَوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكْرًا ﴿٩﴾﴾  
(سورة الإنسان : ٨-٩)

﴿And they give food in spite of love for it to the needy, the orphan, and the captive, [saying,] We feed you only for the countenance of Allah. We wish not from you reward or gratitude.﴾ (Qur'an 76: 8-9)

Moreover, the Sharia reached the pinnacle of humane tendencies when it declared the oneness of all worlds, humans, animals, plants, inanimate objects, the earth and stars in their reliance on Allah (ﷻ) and their submission to the natural laws of the universe. How excellent are the words which the Qur'an requires Muslims to recite in every unit of their prayer:

﴿الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢﴾ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٣﴾﴾

(سورة الفاتحة : ٢-٣)

﴿[All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds — the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.﴾ (Qur'an 1: 2-3)

It is essential for Muslims to remember that they are part of the universe which is the creation of One God, Who has the attributes of ultimate and comprehensive mercy. Accordingly, Muslims, who live in this world and need their Lord (ﷻ), should be an example of that mercy, which is an attribute of Allah (ﷻ), Who has no need of the worlds.

This is the manifestation of the humane tendency in the principles and legislation of our civilization, when it was proclaimed to humankind. But what really happened when it ruled and conquered people? Did these principles remain as a charter, like the modern Charter of Human Rights? The anniversary of its declaration is celebrated by various countries each year, while it is violated by the major states every hour, every day, every month

and every year. Did these principles remain confined to the land in which they were first proclaimed, as in France, while they were withheld from its colonies and the countries which fell under its rule or mandate? Were new statues set up — like the Statue of Liberty in New York, which is the first thing seen by those who enter the United States via that city — while the actions of America overseas were speaking for themselves: cursing and making a mockery of freedom, and persecuting those who love freedom? Let us listen to history, for it is the most truthful witness. Let us listen to the wonders of the humane tendency of our civilization and how it is manifested in the behaviour of individuals and rulers.

«Abu Dharr (رضي الله عنه), an Arab from Ghiffâr, had an argument with Bilâl (رضي الله عنه), a dark-skinned man from Ethiopia and the freed slave of Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه). Abu Dharr (رضي الله عنه) and Bilâl (رضي الله عنه) were Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ), people who believed in Islam and its Messenger. The argument escalated until Abu Dharr (رضي الله عنه) was beside himself with anger and said to Bilâl (رضي الله عنه): O son of a black woman!

Bilâl (رضي الله عنه) complained to the Prophet (ﷺ), who said to Abu Dharr: Are you insulting his mother? Verily you are a man in whom there is *jâhiliyah* (the age of ignorance and spiritual darkness before Islam)!

Abu Dharr (رضي الله عنه) said that he thought that *jâhiliyah* meant sexual and moral deviance which only young men commit; he wondered how he could have done such a thing at his age.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: Yes, they [dark-skinned people] are your brothers.

Abu Dharr (رضي الله عنه) repented and regretted what he had said, so much so that he told Bilâl (رضي الله عنه) to step on his face, expressing the

great extent of his repentance and regret.» (Bukhari, Muslim and others)

«A woman from the tribe of Makhdhoom committed theft during the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) and was brought to him to be punished. He ruled that her hand should be cut off. This decision was quite problematic for the *Quraysh* (the dominant tribe in Makkah then, whose society was based on polytheism), for she had a noble status. They sought to mitigate her sentence to lashing or some monetary penalty, saying: Who will intercede for us with the Messenger of Allah, so she may be spared from punishment?

Then they remembered that Usâmah ibn Zayd (رضي الله عنه) was dearly beloved to the Messenger (ﷺ). They spoke to him and asked him to intercede for her. When Usâmah (رضي الله عنه) spoke to him, the Prophet (ﷺ) became very angry. He said: Do you dare to intercede regarding one of the penalties of Allah?

He then stood up and addressed the people, saying: The only thing that destroyed the people before you was that when a nobleman amongst them would steal, they would leave him [unpunished]. However, when a weak person would steal, they would ensure that he was punished. I swear by the One in whose hands is my soul, if Fâtimah, daughter of Muhammad, ever stole, I would cut off her hand.» (Bukhari, Muslim and Ahmad).

«Qays ibn Mutatiah [a hypocrite] once came to a circle in which Salmân al-Fârîsi [the Persian], Şuhayb ar-Roomi [the Roman] and Bilâl al-Habashi [the Ethiopian] (may Allah be pleased with them all) were sitting. He said: Al-Aws and al-Khazraj [two Arab tribes of Madinah] have undertaken to support this man [Muhammad]. What are these people [Salmân, Şuhayb and Bilâl] doing here?

Mu'âdh ibn Jabal (رضي الله عنه) stood up and grabbed him by the collar, then went to the Prophet (ﷺ) and told him what he had said. The

Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) quickly stood up, angrily, dragging his lower garment, and went to the mosque. There he gave orders to make the call for all the people to gather (a call that was also used to signal that the Eid prayer was about to begin). He addressed the people, saying (according to Ibn ‘Asâkir): O people, your Lord is One, your father (Adam) is one, and your religion is one.»<sup>11</sup>

«One day, before he had become a Muslim, ‘Adiyy ibn Hâtim at-Ṭâ’i came to Madinah. He attended a gathering in which the Messenger (ﷺ) was sitting, surrounded by his Companions. They had just returned from a military campaign and were still wearing their armour. He was astonished by the respect which the Companions were showing to their Prophet (ﷺ). While they were sitting there, a poor woman, one of the slave women of Madinah, came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and said to him: O Messenger of Allah, I need to speak privately to you about something.

He said to her: Wait for me anywhere on the streets of Madinah, and I will speak to you privately.

Then he got up, went [to her] and stood for a long time listening to her before he returned. When ‘Adiyy saw what he had done, he was very moved by the humane attitude of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), and he became a Muslim.» (Muslim and Aḥmad)

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) conquered Makkah after a struggle that had lasted for twenty-one years; he gained victory over those who had fought against him, expelled him and rejected him. However, once he was victorious, he did not remember

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<sup>11</sup> Narrated by Ibn ‘Asâkir with a chain of narration going back to az-Zuhri. The rest of the hadith says: «The Arabness of any one of you does not come from his father or his mother. Rather, it is only a language; whoever speaks Arabic is an Arab.»



anything except his call and its principles. They were the same principles he had been proclaiming when he was keeping a low profile in the alleyways of Makkah and while he was ruling in Madinah, laying the foundations of the Islamic civilization. On that day, he announced the implementation of the principles which he had been proclaiming for so long, even before he had achieved his final victory.

«Standing at the door of the *Kaaba* (the House of Allah in Makkah, which Muslims face when they pray) with an attentive Quraysh, who had been so proud and had been ruled by an oppressive class system, he said [according to Ibn Katheer]: O Quraysh, Allah has taken away the pride of the *jâhiliyah* with its boasting of forebears. People come from Adam, and Adam was created from dust.

Then he recited the words of Allah (ﷻ) which affirm this principle:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ...﴾ (سورة الحجرات: ١٣)

«O humankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you...» (Qur'an 49: 13)»

When Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) was the caliph, he was the model of a modest leader whose heart and soul were filled with humane tendencies. While he was the caliph, he would milk the sheep of the girls of the city who had lost their fathers during war. He used to say: "I hope that being a caliph will not change me and stop me from doing the things I used to do."

‘Umar (ﷺ) was a caliph who harboured protective jealousy for his people. He was kind to the weak and strong in defending the truth. All people were equal before him. He would go hungry so that they could eat their fill. He would deny himself in order to give to the people. He used to check on people in their homes, and there are many well-known stories of his actions.

One day, he saw an old man asking for charity in the market. He asked him: “What is the matter with you, old man?” The man replied: “I am an old man who is asking for help in paying the *jizyah* (a tax levied on the People of the Scriptures who are under the protection of a Muslim state; it is in lieu of the alms tax paid by Muslims) and spending on my own livelihood.” He was one of the Jews who lived in Madinah. The great and humane ‘Umar (ﷺ) said to him: “We have not been fair to you, old man. We took *jizyah* from you when you were young and neglected you when you became old.” He took him by the hand and led him to his house, where he gave him food. Then he sent word to the keeper of the Islamic state treasury: “Give a salary to this man and others like him, so that he and his children can be financially independent.”

One day, ‘Umar (ﷺ) was walking in the streets of Madinah when he saw a young girl stumbling and falling as she tried to walk. ‘Umar (ﷺ) said: “What a poor girl! Do any of you know who she is?” His son ‘Abdullâh asked: “Do you do not know her, O Ameer al-Mu’mineen?” ‘Umar (ﷺ) replied: “No.” ‘Abdullâh said: “She is one of your granddaughters!” ‘Umar (ﷺ) inquired: “Which one?” ‘Abdullâh answered: “This is so-and-so, daughter of ‘Abdullâh ibn ‘Umar [meaning his own daughter].” ‘Umar (ﷺ) said: “Woe to you! What has made her like this?” His son said to him: “[She is like this because of] what you have withheld from the things that are with you.” ‘Umar (ﷺ) said, “You have

no rights over me; you are entitled only to your share like the other Muslims, whether or not that is sufficient. Let us refer to the Qur'an to judge between you and me."

A caravan of traders came to Madinah, among whom there were women and children. 'Umar (ؓ) asked 'Abdur-Rahmân ibn 'Awf (ؓ): "Can you guard them tonight?" The two of them stood guard and prayed as much (of supererogatory prayers) as Allah (ﷻ) had decreed for them. 'Umar (ؓ) heard a child crying; he went to him and said to his mother: "Fear Allah and take care of your child!" After that, he went back to his place and a while later, he heard the child crying again. He went back to the mother and said: "Fear Allah and take care of your child!" Then he returned to his place. Towards the end of the night, he heard the child crying again. He returned to the mother and said: "Woe to you! I see that you are a bad mother! Why did your child not sleep all night?" Not knowing that he was the caliph, she said to him: "O slave of Allah, I am fed up with you tonight! I am trying to wean him, but he refuses." He asked: "Why [do you want to wean him]?" She replied: "Because 'Umar does not give an allowance [stipend for the parents] for a child until he is weaned." 'Umar (ؓ) inquired: "How old is he?" She answered: "Such-and-such number of months." He advised: "Woe to you, do not hurry." When he prayed the dawn prayer, people could hardly hear his recitation because he was weeping so much. After concluding the prayer, he said: "Woe to 'Umar; how many Muslim children has he killed?" He then issued orders for a representative to tell them: "Do not hasten the weaning of your children, because we will give an allowance to every Muslim child." He also sent word of this to all the regions of the Islamic empire.

Indeed, history has never narrated anything more splendid than this incident. No civilization can equal the marvel of 'Umar's

democracy. He would stay up at night and guard the caravan while its people slept. This occurred while he was the caliph, the one who had defeated Chosroes and Caesar and inherited their kingdoms. He did what no one would do today, except maybe a security guard who is commanded to guard something like this caravan. No one would ever do anything like ‘Umar (ﷺ), taking notice of a crying child and telling his mother three times to take care of him. Who would do what ‘Umar (ﷺ) did for the children of that caravan? Which leaders from history can match ‘Umar’s humanitarian attitude?

Let us read an even more remarkable story from the history of our civilization. Aslam, the servant of ‘Umar (ﷺ), narrated: “I went out with ‘Umar one night. We went far from Madinah, checking on the people who lived outside the city. We saw a fire far away and ‘Umar said: ‘I see some travellers over there who have stopped to rest because it is dark and cold. Let’s go!’ So we set off, running until we reached them. We saw a woman with two small children and a huge pot on the fire. Her children were crying and yelling. ‘Umar greeted her and asked her: ‘What is the matter?’ She replied: ‘We have stopped to rest because it is dark and cold.’ ‘Umar asked: ‘What is the matter with these children? Why are they crying and yelling?’ She answered: ‘Because of hunger.’ He inquired: ‘What is in this pot?’ She responded: ‘Water, to keep them quiet until they fall asleep; Allah will judge between us and ‘Umar!’ [She was complaining about ‘Umar and praying against him]. He said: ‘May Allah have mercy on you; how would ‘Umar know about you?’ She said: ‘How is it that he is in charge of us, but he knows nothing about us?’ ‘Umar turned to me and said: ‘Let’s go!’ We set off running, until we came to the place where flour was stored. He took out a sack of flour and some butter. Then, he said: ‘Lift it up onto me.’ I offered: ‘I will carry it

for you.' He asked: 'Will you carry my burden of sin on the Day of Resurrection?' I lifted it onto his shoulders and we set off, running again. He put the things down next to her, took out some of the flour and said: 'Make the dough, and I will bake it for you.' He started blowing the fire beneath the pot. He had a huge beard, and I could see smoke coming out through his beard. He cooked food for them, put the pot down and said: 'Get me something.' She brought a plate; he put food on the plate and said to her: 'Feed it to them, and I will spread it out for them [so that the food would cool down]. He kept on doing that until they had eaten their fill; he left the remaining food with her. He stood up, and I stood up with him. She started saying: 'May Allah reward you with good; you deserve to be the caliph rather than Ameer al-Mu'mineen [‘Umar]!' He said: 'Say something good when you come to Ameer al-Mu'mineen! You will find me with him, *inshallah* (God willing).' He walked away from her, then turned back and stood watching her. I said to him: 'Do you have something else to do?' He did not speak to me. He stayed until he saw the children lie down and fall asleep. Then he stood, praising Allah (ﷻ). Thereafter, he turned to me and said: 'O Aslam, hunger kept them awake and made them cry. I did not want to leave until I had witnessed them falling asleep.'"

This unique and humane example in the history of humankind can be highlighted through another incident. One night, 'Umar (ﷻ) was conducting his usual habit of checking on the people. He passed through one of the quarters of Madinah and saw a tent from which he could hear the groans of a woman in pain. A man was sitting at the door of the tent. 'Umar (ﷻ) greeted him and asked who he was; he replied that he was a Bedouin who had come to avail some of the bounties of the caliph. 'Umar (ﷻ) asked: "What is this noise that I hear coming from inside your

tent?" The man replied, not knowing that he was speaking to 'Umar (ﷺ), Ameer al-Mu'mineen: "Go away (may Allah have mercy on you) and mind your own business; do not ask about what doesn't concern you." However, 'Umar (ﷺ) insisted on asking until the man told him: "It is a woman in labour, and she has no one to help her." 'Umar (ﷺ) went back to his house and asked his wife, Umm Kulthoom bint 'Ali: "Do you want to avail an opportunity to earn Allah's rewards?" She asked: "What is it?" He told her what had happened and asked her to bring the necessary supplies for the woman and her newborn baby. He also asked for a pot containing essential food items. She brought those things, then 'Umar (ﷺ) carried the pot and she walked behind him until they arrived at the tent. He told his wife: "Go in and attend to the woman." He sat down with the man, lit a fire, and cooked the food he had brought. The man was sitting there, not knowing who he was. The woman gave birth and the wife of 'Umar (ﷺ) called out from inside the tent: "O Ameer al-Mu'mineen, give your companion the good news that he has a son." When the Bedouin heard that he was with the caliph himself, he got nervous and started to move away. 'Umar (ﷺ) told him: "Stay where you are!" He carried the pot to his wife and told her to take it and feed the woman. After she had done that, he gave the pot to the man and told him: "Eat, woe to you, for you have stayed up all night!" After that, his wife came out, and 'Umar (ﷺ) said to the man, "Come to us tomorrow, and we will tell you something that is in your best interest." The next day, the man came and was given a stipend for his son.

In all that I have read about the great men of history, I have not come across an incident more wonderful, noble or sublime than this.

One day, George Washington, the liberator of America, was walking through the streets of the city that bears his name. He saw some soldiers trying to lift a rock, but they could not do it. Their sergeant was standing, not even trying to help them. Washington said to him: "Help them lift it!" The sergeant refused and said: "I will not stoop to their level." Washington threw aside his cloak and helped them lift the rock, then said to them: "Whenever you need some help, ask for the house of Washington." This is something rare and indicative of a great character. Even so, what is this in comparison to what 'Umar (رضي الله عنه) did when he gave up his sleep and went to check on his people? When he heard about a pregnant woman in labour with no one to help her, he went back to his house and brought his wife in the middle of the night. He carried food while she carried clothes, until they came to the tent. His wife, who in modern terms would be regarded as the 'First Lady' of the country, played the role of a midwife, while he played the role of a cook. What an example of sublime humanity that has never been reached by any president on the face of the earth! This is one of the great deeds of 'Umar (رضي الله عنه) and one of the wonders of our civilization. It moulded 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (رضي الله عنه), son of the desert, into a human being who reached the pinnacle of greatness, just as our civilization reached the pinnacle of human civilization.

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'Umar (رضي الله عنه) is not the only example of the perfection of our merciful humanity. Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه), 'Uthmān (رضي الله عنه), 'Ali (رضي الله عنه), 'Umar ibn 'Abdul 'Azeez, Ṣalāh ad-Deen (Saladin) and other scholars, leaders, devoted worshippers and philosophers of our civilization are all enduring examples of the sublime humane characteristics of our enduring civilization.

## CHAPTER 4

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### RACIAL EQUALITY

Another aspect of the humane tendency in our enduring civilization is the affirmation of true equality between people, regardless of the colour of their skin. The Qur'an has declared the principle of equality in the following verse:

﴿... إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ...﴾ (سورة الحُجُرَات: ١٣)

﴿...Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you...﴾ (Qur'an 49: 13)

The Messenger (ﷺ), while delivering the farewell sermon on his last pilgrimage, proclaimed [according to Ibn Sa'd]: "People come from Adam, and Adam came from dust. There is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab or of a fair-skinned person over a dark-skinned, except in terms of piety."

This equality was not limited to the announcement of principles on various occasions, as we see from the leaders of modern civilization. Instead, this equality was implemented fully and was not regarded as unusual. It was practiced as second nature, rather than applied self-consciously. It was manifested in the mosques, where the fair-skinned and dark-skinned stood



together in the same row, in submission and humility before Allah (ﷻ). A fair-skinned man was not offended to find a dark-skinned man standing besides him. It was manifested during the Hajj, when all the races of humankind gathered in one place, wearing the same clothes, with no distinction between the dark-skinned and the fair-skinned, and certainly no feelings of superiority on the part of one towards the other.

Indeed, we find an even more sublime example than that. On the day of the conquest of Makkah, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) commanded the Ethiopian Companion, Bilâl (رضي الله عنه), to climb atop the Kaaba, give the call to prayer and proclaim the words of truth. The Kaaba had been a sacred sanctuary of the Arabs during the period of pre-Islamic ignorance. It was the *qibla* (the direction that all Muslims face in prayer) that was respected in Islam. How could a black slave like Bilâl (رضي الله عنه) climb atop it and step on it with his feet?

This equality cannot be imagined in modern civilizations, like America, for example.<sup>12</sup> However, our civilization implemented such equality fourteen centuries ago. Bilâl's climbing atop the Kaaba was a declaration of human dignity above all else, and a statement that humans deserve to be honoured in this way because of their knowledge, reason, morals and faith, not because of their skin colour. This is because their skin does not make people any better if their deeds are bad; likewise, it does not make them inferior if they are intelligent and strive hard.

As mentioned previously, the Prophet (ﷺ) disapproved when Abu Dharr (رضي الله عنه), one of his noblest Companions, slandered another Companion, saying: O son of a black woman!

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<sup>12</sup> As mentioned previously, the author wrote this more than fifty years ago, in a very different racial climate. The reader should note that while his descriptions were accurate at the time, they do not reflect the current situation.

He disapproved and rebuked him, saying: «Are you insulting his mother? Verily you are a man in whom there is *jâhiliyah*!» (Bukhari, Muslim and others)

This is the criterion that distinguishes between knowledge and ignorance in Islamic civilization, between a humane civilization and an ignorant civilization.

A civilization in which no race feels superior to another, and no colour feels superior to another, is a civilization which has been established by dignified and wise people, where humankind can find true happiness. A civilization in which the fair-skinned feel superior and humiliate the dark-skinned, in which only the fair-skinned are happy and people of colour are miserable, can only be considered an ignorant civilization. It pushes humankind back hundreds of years to the ages of blindness, arrogance, ignorance and foolishness. «Verily you are a man in whom there is *jâhiliyah*!» This is the description of an ignorant civilization which proclaims racial discrimination. This is what our civilization fought against in all spheres of life: in the mosques, schools, courts and leadership, with friends and enemies alike.

When Muslims came to conquer Egypt, they penetrated deeply into the country until they reached the fortress of Babylon. The Coptic Patriarch of Egypt wanted to negotiate with the Muslims. He sent a delegation to them to find out what they wanted and then asked them to send a delegation to him. ‘Amr ibn al-‘Âṣ (ﷺ) sent ten men to them; among them was ‘Ubâdah ibn as-Sâmit (ﷺ). ‘Ubâdah (ﷺ) was dark-skinned and so tall that it has been said he was ten hand spans tall. ‘Amr (ﷺ) issued instructions that he (‘Ubâdah) should be their spokesperson. The delegation entered, led by ‘Ubâdah (ﷺ). The Patriarch was apparently scared by his appearance. He said to them: “Keep this black man away from me and let someone else speak to me.” All the men of the delegation

said: "This 'black' man is the best among us in terms of wisdom and knowledge; he is our leader and the best among us. We refer to his opinion; furthermore, our leader has issued instructions to him and not to us. He has commanded us not to go against what he says."

The Patriarch said to them: "How can you be pleased that this black man is the best among you? He should be the least among you!" They replied: "Not at all! Even though he is dark-skinned, as you can see, he has one of the highest positions; he is one of the earliest Muslims and one of the best in wisdom and knowledge. Dark skin is not despised among us." The Patriarch said to 'Ubâdah (ﷺ): "Come forward, O black man and speak to me kindly, for I am afraid of your blackness. If you speak harshly, you will make me even more afraid." 'Ubâdah (ﷺ), who had noticed that the Patriarch was afraid of his dark skin, said: "In our army are a thousand 'black' men, who are blacker than I am."

Do you not see how wonderful, sublime and humane this civilization is? All people, even the civilized people of the twentieth century, believe that dark-skinned people are inferior. They do not think that dark-skinned people are qualified to be among the fair-skinned; how can they defer to them, make them leaders or recognise that they may be superior in wisdom and knowledge? Our civilization came to destroy these standards and prove these views to be foolish. It proved that a dark-skinned man can be superior to a fair-skinned one, if his knowledge, wisdom and courage warrant it. 'Ubâdah ibn as-Sâmit (ﷺ) was just one of the dark-skinned men who were raised to positions of leadership by our civilization.

During the Hajj, 'Abdul Malik ibn Marwân instructed a caller to proclaim that no one could issue religious decrees except 'Aṭṭā ibn Abi Rabâḥ, the imam, scholar and jurist of the people of

Makkah. Do you know what this 'Aṭā' was like? He was dark-skinned with only one eye and physical disabilities that made him unable to walk properly. No one would have thought much about him or given him a second look. When he sat in his study circles among thousands of students, he looked like a black crow in a field of cotton. However, our civilization made this one-eyed, dark-skinned man an imam whom people referred to for religious rulings, as well as a leader of a school from which thousands of fair-skinned people graduated. They all honoured, loved and revered him.

Our society had respected figures in the fields of science and literature who were dark-skinned, yet the colour of their skin did not prevent them from being intellectuals. Some were in the inner circle of the caliphs, such as the poet Naseeb, or jurists such as 'Uthmân ibn 'Alī az-Zayla'i, who wrote a commentary on *al-Kanz fil-Fiqh al-Ḥanafī*, and others who wrote the respected sources of Islamic fiqh. Also included was al-Ḥāfiḍh Jamāl ad-Deen Abu Muhammad 'Abdullāh ibn Yoosuf az-Zayla'i (762 AH), the author of *Nasb ar-Râyah*. They both were dark-skinned men from Zayla', Ethiopia.

No educated Arab can be unaware of Kafoor al-Ikhsheedi, the dark-skinned slave who ruled Egypt in the fourth century AH. He was immortalised by the poet al-Mutanabbih in verses which both praised and condemned him. All told, racial discrimination was unknown in our civilization. There were no neighbourhoods exclusively for the dark-skinned; there was no persecution of dark-skinned individuals to make them objects of hatred and scorn for the fair-skinned. Instead, our humane civilization treated all people with truth and justice, and only looked at the whiteness or blackness of people's actions.

﴿مَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ﴾ (٧) وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ ﴿٨﴾  
 (سورة الزلزلة : ٧-٨)

«So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.» (*Qur'an* 99: 7-8)

These ideas may have seemed strange fifty years ago because it is plain that discriminating between people on the basis of their skin colour is a barbaric action which no advanced civilization would accept. Our civilization would never have done that. It is well-known for spreading brotherhood and equality among people. Nevertheless, after the establishment of the United Nations and the proclamation of the Charter of Human Rights, we need to speak about this matter. The world has seen and heard about certain disastrous events such as racial discrimination (apartheid) in South Africa, horrific crimes of colonialism in Kenya, and the situation of the African-Americans. It is strange that the rulers in South Africa promoting racial discrimination, those who are persecuting the blacks politically and economically in Kenya and those who are inflicting the greatest suffering on the dark-skinned individuals in America are not Easterners, whom Westerners always accuse of backwardness and barbarism. On the contrary, they are advanced nations and among the most prominent members of the United Nations. America is the greatest nation which dominates the United Nations; Great Britain is the greatest state in Europe and boasts of democracy; South Africa is represented at the United Nations by a ruling class of fair-skinned Europeans who have colonised that region and speak for it. The countries of South America hold high positions and are heeded in the United Nations. These states are the ones which, in the twentieth century, have committed the most abhorrent crimes that humanity has ever witnessed in its history. They are the crimes of

persecuting another not because of the person's weakness or ignorance but because of the colour of his or her skin.

The government of South Africa is still insisting, despite objections voiced by the Asian-African lobby at the United Nations, on discriminating between the fair-skinned and dark-skinned with regard to rights, obligations and privileges. England is still carrying out massacres in Kenya against the free natives of the Mau-Mau. Indeed, it is still insisting on implementing the Land Law of 1915, which gives 29,000 Europeans rights to land in Kenya. They are not being granted to 4,550,000 Africans who are being persecuted in their own lands, workplaces and homes, even though they are the rightful owners of the land and its resources. Sir Elliot, the first governor-general of Kenya, said in 1900, concerning his government's policy in Kenya that: "...inside the protectorate (i.e., Kenya) was land for the white man, and that it was hypocritical not to admit that the interests of the whites should take priority; the basic goal of the policies that we follow and the laws that we set up should be to establish a white colony." This policy has remained the goal of the European rulers of Kenya until the present.<sup>13</sup> The idea is that all land will belong to the Europeans, who can dispose of its resources according to their wishes.

One of the strange features of the Land Law in Kenya is that the governor is allowed to give land to whomever he wishes. Also, land totalling less than five thousand acres may be given for a nominal rent for a period of 999 years. In 1925, the average holding of a colonialist was five hundred acres, as opposed to eight acres for a native. The policy of segregating the natives from the colonialists was done on the basis of designating specific areas

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<sup>13</sup> The first edition of this book was written more than fifty years ago.

for the dark-skinned, beyond which they were not permitted to venture. Dark-skinned workers who were employed on the farms were kicked off the land by the colonialists once their work was completed. They were sent to their huts and dwellings in the low-lying areas, far away from the homes of the fair-skinned.

Moving on to the United States, we discover something shocking and distressing in the New World, where the Statue of Liberty in the harbour of New York greets everyone who arrives into the city. Underneath the statue, the following words are written:

*Give me your tired, your poor,  
your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
the wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me.  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.*

Yes indeed, in the land of freedom, which has set up its statue in its greatest harbour and seaport, unfolds the tragedy of persecution of the dark-skinned; it is the worst crime that humanity has ever known in its history.<sup>14</sup> The accusation against their society is not untrue; rather, the people themselves admit it. A member of the United States Senate said: "The coloured man who desires equality has no business in the southern states, for this land belongs to the white man and it should remain like that."

Without doubt, the persecution of the dark-skinned in the U.S. manifests itself in a variety of ways in a number of fields.

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<sup>14</sup> The following discussion mentions many facts, laws and attitudes that were prevalent in mid-twentieth century America when this book was originally written. Obviously, the situation is different today. (Editor)

In the field of education, twenty states in the U.S. refused to allow dark-skinned students to study in the same schools as the fair-skinned.

Clause 207 of the constitution of the state of Mississippi says the following: It is essential in this field — the field of education — that white children be segregated from black children, so that each group will have its own schools.<sup>15</sup>

The laws of the state of Florida dictate that the schoolbooks of the dark-skinned students should be kept separately from the books of the fair-skinned children.<sup>16</sup>

With regard to marriage, nearly all the states forbid the marriage of a white woman to a black man or vice versa. The constitutions of some states, such as Mississippi, stipulate that such marriages are null and void. In fact, the marriage of a white person to someone whose ancestry is even one-eighth African is null and void.<sup>17</sup>

With regard to work, the laws of some states dictate that dark-skinned workers are not allowed to work with fair-skinned workers in the same part of the factory; also, the dark-skinned are not even allowed to enter and exit through the same doors as the fair-skinned.<sup>18</sup>

In the area of social matters, the laws of fourteen states require segregation of fair-skinned and white-skinned passengers on the

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<sup>15</sup> This clause was deleted by proclamation by the Secretary of State on December 22, 1978. [http://www.sos.state.ms.us/ed\\_pubs/constitution/constitution.asp](http://www.sos.state.ms.us/ed_pubs/constitution/constitution.asp) (Editor)

<sup>16</sup> This was amended to ensure equal education. [http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&Search\\_String=&URL=1000-1099/1000/Sections/1000.05.html](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=1000-1099/1000/Sections/1000.05.html) (Editor)

<sup>17</sup> This law was abolished in 1967. (Editor)

<sup>18</sup> This is no longer legal in the United States. (Editor)



railways; they also require provision of separate compartments for the dark-skinned on trains and buses, along with separate telephone booths and separate rooms in hospitals. Even in mental hospitals, an insane fair-skinned man must be segregated from an insane dark-skinned man. Even stranger is the fact that the owner of a dogs' graveyard in Washington announced in 1947 that he would not accept the bodies of dogs that had belonged to dark-skinned people. He explained that although he knew that the dogs would not be offended if they were all buried in the same graveyard, his fair-skinned customers were offended by the humiliating treatment given to their pampered pets after they had died — meaning being treated the same as the dark-skinned people's dogs.

One of the excuses that American politicians give for this shameful state of affairs is that the hatred of the dark-skinned is worse in the southern states, that is, in states that are less civilized than the northern ones. However, facts prove that these excuses are lame. In all the major northern cities, you will find a vast majority of dark-skinned inhabitants crowded in filthy quarters built of tumble-down wooden houses that are teeming with mice and rats; fires break out there daily. In the 'black' district in New York, Harlem, you will find nineteen black people living in one room. One of the newspapers there said that if we were to take the population density of Harlem and apply it to the entire population of the United States, we would be able to put all of them in half of New York.

Within view of the White House in Washington, and in the shade of the beautiful Lincoln Memorial, is an ugly quarter in which 250,000 dark-skinned live. In other words, a quarter of the population of the capital lives like animals in stables. In this capital, they are forbidden to enter hotels, restaurants, theatres,

schools, hospitals and even churches that are only for the fair-skinned.

A dark-skinned man from the republic of Panama went into a Catholic church in Washington. While he was absorbed in his prayers, one of the priests rushed to him and handed him a piece of paper on which was written the address of a 'black' Catholic church. When the priest was asked why he had done that, he replied that there were churches only for 'black' Catholics in the city, where this man could stand before his Lord. This is despite the fact that they proclaim that the Messiah [Jesus ('*alayhi as-salâm* — peace be upon him)] is for all humankind.<sup>19</sup>

Fifteen million blacks live with this humiliation and scorn; in an atmosphere of sickness, poverty and misery.<sup>20</sup> This is one-tenth of the population of the United States, which leads the United Nations and proclaims that its mission is to bring freedom and peace to the people of this world.

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<sup>19</sup> As noted previously, the original book was written over fifty years ago, and the situation is not the same today. (Editor)

<sup>20</sup> In a report published by the U.S. Education Department, Professor Brown studied the living conditions in 'black' districts throughout the United States. He said: Paved roads, street lights, sanitation pipes and police protection usually end where the black quarter of the city begins. In many areas, there is no hospital where a black man can knock at the door. As for medical and nursing services, they are usually inadequate or absent altogether. Look at these painful statistics on the level of health among blacks: In Chicago and New York, the rate of tuberculosis cases among black residents in 1947 was five times the rate among white inhabitants. In New York and New Jersey, it was approximately seven times more. The death rate for new mothers among blacks was twice the rate among whites, and the death rate among black children was 70% greater than among white children. The average life expectancy of a black American is ten whole years lower than the average life expectancy of a white American.

We think it is appropriate, in this context, to quote what the American, Harry Hayward, wrote about the reality of this freedom in his book *The Liberation of the Negroes*:

There can be no doubt that race was not used in any country — with the exception of South Africa — as a means of enslaving a people as it has been used in this country. Slavery in the sense of slave-owning has come to an end, but it is still going on in the sense of the class system. The aim now is to keep the coloureds in a position inferior to that enjoyed by whites, and to try to reinforce that by various means, sometimes by issuing a sentence of execution, or by means of an execution carried out by the ignorant masses on a Negro, far removed from any judicial authority. Sometimes it is achieved through unfair legislation or by the unjust process of law, and sometimes through customs and traditions that have no foundation whatsoever.

The American economist, Victor Perlo, says:

There can be no doubt that the industrialists of the north who controlled the federal government during the Civil War were not keen to free the Negro people in any proper sense. All they were trying to do was to take the place of the southern slave-owners in exploiting the Negro people as much as possible. The fact of the matter is that the political policy followed by the Republican Party and the army in the southern states was an alliance with the former slave-owners aimed at subjugating the Negroes all over again.

He continues:

The poison of racism spread throughout the length and breadth of the country, and penetrated all walks of American life. The

people became accustomed to using all sorts of phrases indicating scorn and disdain when referring to the Negro people and other racial minorities.

Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer said:

America is famous among the peoples of this world for having as its symbol the Statue of Liberty. What this means is that we should welcome everyone who comes to our land seeking protection, either fleeing from persecution or to escape oppression. But, it seems that this meaning of freedom has completely vanished since this statue was erected on its foundation.

In 1946, in the city of Columbia, Tennessee, an African-American man and his mother went to a repair shop to have a radio fixed. After paying the price that was demanded, they realised that the radio had not been fixed and was still broken. The mother said: "Thirteen dollars and the radio is still broken?" The owner of the shop ordered them to be thrown out. One of the employees kicked the mother, and she fell on her face. The man got angry and hit the one who had attacked her, throwing him to the ground. The neighbouring storekeeper shouted out: "Kill the son of a b——!" Crowds gathered and started shouting, "Let's punish them!" Punishment for the dark-skinned by fair-skinned Americans meant decapitating them with no trial or sentence by a court. In the end, they were rescued from the mob and taken to prison, but the mob was not satisfied. They rushed to a 'black' neighbourhood to wreak their vengeance on the woman and her son. The police surrounded the unfortunate neighbourhood and the poor dark-skinned people were chased from their homes and stores, which were looted and burned. Shots were fired at the unlucky people, resulting in a large number of deaths and injuries.

All this happened because a black woman complained to a shopkeeper that she had paid for her radio to be fixed and had not gotten anything in return. This is an example of their civilization.

In 100 AH, thirteen hundred years ago, a dark-skinned woman called Fartoonah complained to the caliph, ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdul ‘Azeez, that people were climbing into her yard and stealing her chickens because she had a low wall. ‘Umar immediately sent word to the governor of Egypt to raise her wall and repair her house. He wrote to his governor in Egypt, Ayyoob ibn Sharhabeel, telling him: “Fartoonah, the freed slave of Dhi Asbah, has written to me and told me that her wall is too low and that her chickens are being stolen. She is asking me to raise it for her. When this letter of mine reaches you, go there yourself and build it for her!” When the letter reached him, he went to Giza himself, asked for Fartoonah until he found where she lived, and discovered that she was a poor, dark-skinned woman. He told her what the caliph had written to him and raised the height of her wall for her.

This is what we did thirteen hundred years ago. This is an example of our civilization.

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## CHAPTER 5

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### RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

Religious tolerance is yet another aspect of the humane tendency in our enduring civilization. It was something new in the history of beliefs and religions, as well as in the history of ancient civilizations that were produced by specific religions or specific nations. Islam produced a civilization that was not hostile towards previous religions. Also, it did not advocate blind following of opinions and views. Rather, its motto was:

﴿... فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ ﴿١٧﴾ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ ۚ ﴿١٨﴾﴾

(سورة الزمر: ١٧-١٨)

﴿...So give good tidings to My servants, who listen to speech and follow the best of it...﴾  
(*Qur'an* 39: 17-18)

Because of that, the principles of our civilization regarding religious tolerance are as follows:

1 — All the divinely-revealed religions have stemmed from the same source:

﴿شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ ۚ﴾

إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ كَبُرَ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِينَ مَا  
تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَيْهِ ... ﴿١٣﴾ (سورة الشورى: ١٣)

«He has ordained for you of religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], and what We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus — to establish the religion and not be divided therein...» (Qur'an 42: 13)

2 — The Prophets are brothers, and there is no difference among them with regard to their message. Muslims are obliged to believe in them all:

﴿قُولُوا ءَامَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ  
وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَمَا أُوتِيَ النَّبِيُّونَ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ  
أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٣٦)

«Say [O believers]: We have believed in Allah and what has been revealed to us, and what has been revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the descendants, and what was given to Moses and Jesus, and what was given to the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we are Muslims [in submission] to Him.» (Qur'an 2: 136)

3 — Belief cannot be forced upon people; rather it must come by conviction and acceptance:

﴿لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ ...﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٥٦)

«There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion...» (Qur'an 2: 256)

﴿وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَآمَنَ مَن فِي الْأَرْضِ كُلُّهُمْ جِيعًا أَفَأَنْتَ تُكْرِهُ النَّاسَ حَتَّىٰ  
يَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ﴾ (سورة يونس: ٩٩)

«And had your Lord willed, those on earth would have believed — all of them entirely. Then, [O Muhammad,] would you compel the people in order that they become believers?» (Qur'an 10: 99)

4 — Places of worship belonging to the divinely-revealed religions are sacred and must be respected.

﴿... وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُم بِبَعْضٍ لَّهُدَمَتِ صَوَامِعُ وَبِيْعٌ وَصَلَوَاتٌ وَمَسَاجِدُ يُذَكَّرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا...﴾ (سورة الحج: ٤٠)

«...And were it not that Allah checks the people, some by means of others, there would have been demolished monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of Allah is much mentioned...» (Qur'an 22: 40)

5 — Differences of religion should not make people fight or commit aggression against one another; rather, everyone should cooperate in doing good and warding off evil:

﴿... وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ...﴾ (سورة المائدة: ٢)

«...And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression...» (Qur'an 5: 2)

With regard to the differences between them, Allah (ﷻ) alone is the One Who will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection:

﴿وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ لَيْسَتِ النَّصْرَىٰ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ وَقَالَتِ النَّصْرَىٰ لَيْسَتِ الْيَهُودُ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ وَهُمْ يَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ ۚ فَاللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١١٣)

«The Jews say: The Christians have nothing [true] to stand on, and the Christians say: The Jews have nothing to stand on, although



they [both] recite the scripture. Thus the polytheists speak the same as their words. But Allah will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that over which they used to differ. ﴿﴾ (Qur'an 2: 113)

6 — Differentiation between people in this life and before Allah (ﷻ) is based on the degree to which they can do good actions for themselves and for others.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «The most beloved to Allah are those who are the most beneficial to humankind.» (Ibn Hibbân; a reliable hadith according to al-Albâni)

﴿... إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاهُ...﴾ (سورة الحجرات: ١٣)

﴿...Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you...﴾ (Qur'an 49: 13)

7 — Differences in religion do not mean that we should stop being kind, upholding ties of kinship or showing hospitality:

﴿الْيَوْمَ أُحِلَّ لَكُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتُ وَطَعَامُ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حِلٌّ لَكُمْ وَطَعَامُكُمْ حِلٌّ لَهُمْ وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ إِذَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ أَجُورَهُنَّ مُحْصِنِينَ غَيْرَ مُسْفِحِينَ وَلَا مُتَّخِذِي أَخْدَانٍ...﴾ (سورة المائدة: ٥)

﴿This day [all] good foods have been made lawful, and the food of those who were given the scripture is lawful for you, and your food is lawful for them. And [lawful in marriage are] chaste women from among the believers and chaste women from among those who were given the scripture before you, when you have given them their due compensation, desiring chastity, not unlawful sexual intercourse or taking [secret] lovers...﴾ (Qur'an 5: 5)

8 — If people follow different religions, they are permitted to dispute amiably and gently, remaining within the constraints of

good manners. They should present convincing arguments and debate in a sound manner.

﴿وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ...﴾ (٤٦)

(سورة العنكبوت: ٤٦)

﴿And do not argue with the people of the scripture except in a way that is best...﴾ (Qur'an 29: 46)

It is not permissible to be rude towards those who hold different views or to insult their beliefs, even if they are idolaters:

﴿وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدَوًّا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ كَذَلِكَ زَيَّنَّا لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ عَمَلَهُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ مَرْجِعُهُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ﴾ (١٠٨)

(سورة الأنعام: ١٠٨)

﴿And do not insult those they invoke other than Allah, lest they insult Allah in enmity without knowledge. Thus We have made pleasing to every community their deeds. Then to their Lord is their return, and He will inform them about what they used to do.﴾ (Qur'an 6: 108)

9 — If the beliefs of the Ummah come under attack, we must respond in order to protect our beliefs and ward off *fitnah* (tribulation):

﴿وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّىٰ لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ...﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٩٣)

﴿Fight them until there is no [more] fitnah and [until] worship is [acknowledged to be] for Allah...﴾ (Qur'an 2: 193)

﴿إِنَّمَا يَنْهَكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ قَاتَلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَأَخْرَجُوكُم مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ وَظَاهَرُوا عَلَىٰ إِخْرَاجِكُمْ أَنْ تَوَلَّوهُمْ...﴾ (سورة الممتحنة: ٩)

﴿Allah only forbids you from those who fight you because of religion and expel you from your homes and aid in your expulsion — [forbids] that you make allies of them...﴾ (Qur'an 60: 9)

10 — If the Ummah gains victory over those who have attacked their religion or sought to deprive them of the freedom to worship, it is not permissible to take revenge by forcing them to give up their religion or persecuting them for their beliefs. It is sufficient for them to acknowledge the authority of the state and pledge allegiance to it, so that “they will share the same rights and obligations as us.”

These are the principles of religious tolerance in Islam, upon which our civilization is based. These principles oblige Muslims to believe in all the Prophets and Messengers of Allah, mention all of them respectfully, refrain from mistreating their followers, deal with them amiably and gently, speak kindly to them, be good neighbours to them and accept their hospitality. Muslims may also marry among them with certain conditions.

Islam obliges the Muslim state to protect their places of worship; also, interference in their beliefs or unfair ruling against them must be avoided. They should be treated equally with the Muslims in terms of rights and obligations; their honour, lives and futures should be protected just as those of the Muslims are protected.

Our civilization was built on this basis. It is through this that the world saw, for the first time, a religion building a civilization which did not persecute the followers of other religions or exclude non-believers from work or social status. This tolerance remained the practice of the Islamic civilization from the time its foundations were laid by Muhammad (ﷺ) until it began to decline. When these principles were lost and forgotten, people

became ignorant of their religion and abandoned this noble religious tolerance.

When the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) migrated to Madinah, there were a large number of Jews in the city. One of the first affairs of state that he dealt with was to sign an accord with them. Accordingly, their beliefs were respected and the state was obliged to ward off harm from them; they would participate equally with the Muslims against anyone who sought to attack Madinah. Thus, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) applied the principles of religious tolerance from the earliest beginnings of an Islamic civilization.

The Messenger (ﷺ) had neighbours from among the people of the book. He used to treat them kindly, giving them gifts and accepting gifts from them. This continued until a Jewish woman put poison in a leg of lamb which she gave him as a gift. He used to accept her gifts because he was a good neighbour to her.

When a delegation of Ethiopian Christians came to Madinah, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) let them stay in the mosque, and he himself took care of them and served them. One of the things that he said that day was that they had honoured his Companions, so he wanted to honour them himself.

«One day a delegation of Christians from Najrân came to him; he let them stay in the mosque and pray there. They would pray on one side of the mosque, while the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and the Muslims would pray on the other side. When they wanted to discuss and defend their religion in front of the Messenger (ﷺ), he listened to them and debated with them gently, politely and tolerably. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) accepted a slave girl as a gift from the Patriarch of the Copts [then the ruler of Egypt] and took her as a concubine. She bore him a son, Ibrâheem, who lived

only for a few months. One of the things that he enjoined on the Muslims was [according to Ibn Is-hâq]: Treat the Egyptians well, for you are related to them through ties of blood and ties of marriage.»<sup>21</sup>

After he died, the Caliphs followed the teachings of the Messenger (ﷺ) with regard to kind and humane attitudes and religious tolerance. We see that when ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb (رضي الله عنه) entered Jerusalem as a conqueror, he responded to the Christians’ request that no Jew would be allowed to live among them. The time for the obligatory mid-afternoon prayer approached while he was inside the main church of Jerusalem, but he refused to pray there in case the Muslims later used that as an excuse to demand its possession and use it as a mosque.

A Christian woman living in Egypt complained to him that ‘Amr ibn al-‘Âṣ (رضي الله عنه) had incorporated her house into the mosque against her objections. He asked ‘Amr (رضي الله عنه) about that. He informed him that the number of Muslims had increased, and the mosque had become too small for them. This woman’s house was next to the mosque and ‘Amr (رضي الله عنه) had offered her the price of her house and more, however, she had refused to sell it. This left ‘Amr (رضي الله عنه) with no option but to knock down her house and incorporate it into the mosque. He had put the money in the state treasury for her to take whenever she wanted. Even though this would be permissible according to our present laws and was a case in which ‘Amr’s action may have been justified, ‘Umar (رضي الله عنه) did not approve. He ordered ‘Amr to knock down the new part of the mosque and restore the Christian woman’s house.

This is the spirit of tolerance which prevailed in the society built upon the principles of our civilization. We see many

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<sup>21</sup> Also refer to *Faṭḥ al-Bâri* by Imam Ibn Rajab

examples of religious tolerance that were not found anywhere else in history, not even in the modern age.

Another example of religious tolerance in our civilization is that mosques were often built next to churches. The clergy in the churches were given full authority over their flocks with regard to all religious and church matters, without any interference from the state. However, the state could intervene in order to solve the problems between Christian groups and judge justly between them. During the Byzantine period, Byzantine Christians used to persecute the Copts of Egypt and occupy their churches. In contrast, when the Muslims conquered Egypt, they returned the churches to the Copts and restored their rights. After that, the Copts transgressed against the Byzantines in revenge for what they had done to them before the Arab conquest. The Byzantines complained to Hâroon ar-Rasheed (Harun al-Rashid), who discussed this matter with their Patriarch and then ordered that the churches owned by the Copts in Egypt should be returned to the Byzantines.

Concerning the freedom to perform rituals and the authority of the clergy over their congregations without state interference, the Christian inhabitants of the land felt freer than they had under the rule of Byzantium. None of us can forget the attitude of Muhammad al-Fâtih when he took control of Byzantium, the seat of the Orthodox Patriarchy for the entire East. On that day, he proclaimed that its inhabitants, all of whom were Christians, were safe; their money, their lives, their beliefs, their churches, and their crosses were all safe. They were exempted from military service; also, their leaders were given the necessary authority to enact legislation and settle disputes that arose between members of their congregations, without any interference from the state. The citizens of Constantinople witnessed a great difference between

the way they had been treated during the Byzantine era and the way Muhammad al-Fâtîḥ treated them. The Byzantines had interfered in doctrinal disputes and were biased in favour of the followers of their own church, against the followers of other churches. The people were happy with the new rule and were delighted with this religious tolerance, the like of which they had never witnessed with any of their previous rulers, even though those rulers were also Christian. The authority granted to the Patriarch of Byzantium was like a state within a state. He and his followers enjoyed this privilege for nearly five hundred years, acting independently. These privileges were not granted in return for supplying soldiers or money to the state. Unfortunately, this religious tolerance, which was historically unique, led to the granting of privileges to foreigners. This was exploited by the Europeans towards the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century and resulted in undermining the country's sovereignty.

Another manifestation of religious tolerance in our civilization is that in many churches, Muslims and Christians used to pray simultaneously, during the time of the Islamic conquest. We have seen how the Prophet (ﷺ) allowed the Christians of Najrân to pray in his mosque alongside the Muslims, who were performing their own prayers. In the Cathedral of Saint John, in Damascus, which later became the Umayyad Mosque, the Christians agreed to let the Muslims occupy a half of it; Muslims were happy to pray there. Consequently, you could see the followers of the two religions praying next to one another, with the Muslims facing the qiblah and the Christians facing the east, at the same time. This is a unique example in history with deep significance, indicative of the religious tolerance of our civilization.

Another example of religious tolerance is that jobs would be given to those who were the most deserving and most qualified,

regardless of their beliefs and schools of thought. Accordingly, during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods, Christian doctors were highly respected by the caliphs. They supervised the schools of medicine in Baghdad and Damascus for a long time. The Christian doctor Ibn Athâl was the private doctor of Mu'âwiyah, and Sarjoon was his scribe. Marwân appointed Athnasius, along with another named Is-hâq, to some government positions in Egypt. Subsequently, Athnasius reached the position of leadership in those departments. He was a rich, powerful man who owned four thousand slaves and many houses, villages, gardens, gold and silver. He built a church in ar-Raha utilising the rent from his four hundred shops. He became so famous that 'Abdul Malik ibn Marwân appointed him to teach his young brother, 'Abdul 'Azeez, who later became the governor of Egypt and was the father of 'Umar ibn 'Abdul 'Azeez.

One of the most famous doctors, who was well-liked by the caliphs, was Jarjees ibn Bakhtiyashoo'. He was close to and well-liked by the caliph, al-Manşoor. The caliph wanted him to be happy, but Jarjees had an old and sick wife, so al-Manşoor sent three beautiful slave women to him. Jarjees refused to accept them, saying, "My religion does not allow me to marry as long as my wife is still alive." Al-Manşoor was pleased with him and respected him even more. When he fell sick, al-Manşoor ordered for him to be brought to a public hospital. He went there, walking, to inquire about his condition. The doctor sought permission to return to his homeland so he could be buried with his forebears. Al-Manşoor invited him to enter Islam, so he might enter paradise. However, he refused and said: "I want to be with my forefathers, whether in heaven or hell." Al-Manşoor smiled and issued orders for preparations to be made for his journey. He also gave him ten thousand *dinars* (gold coins).



A Christian, Salmawayh ibn Banân, was the doctor of al-Mu'tasim. When he died, al-Mu'tasim was deeply saddened and respected his doctor's wishes as to how he was to be buried.

Bakhtiyashoo' ibn Jibreel was al-Mutawakkil's doctor, and was well-liked by him. He equalled the caliph in dress, luxury, wealth and respect.

Poets and literati were also well-liked by the caliphs and governors, regardless of their religion or school of thought. We all know about the position and status of al-Akhtal during the Umayyad period. He used to visit 'Abdul Malik without permission, wearing a cloak of silk adorned with amulets, with a golden cross dangling from his neck on a golden chain and wine dripping from his beard. He is the one who condemned the *Anṣâr* (the Muslim citizens of Madinah who gave refuge to the Prophet and the other Muslim emigrants from Makkah) in a lengthy poem in which he said: "Meanness rests beneath the turbans of the *Anṣâr*."<sup>22</sup> The *Anṣâr* got very upset at this. They sent their leader, an-Nu'mân ibn Basheer (ؓ), a Companion of the Messenger of Allah (ؐ), to 'Abdul Malik ibn Marwân. He raised his turban and asked: "Do you see any meanness here, O Ameer al-Mu'mineen?" The caliph spoke kindly to him, without offending al-Akhtal in any way.<sup>23</sup>

Like the caliphs, ordinary individuals also befriended whomever they wanted, regardless of religion. Ibrâheem ibn Hilâl was a Sabian who reached the highest position in the state. He had a good relationship and strong friendship with the leading Muslim

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<sup>22</sup> This behaviour, though unacceptable Islamically, demonstrates how patient and tolerant Muslims were with the non-Muslims.

<sup>23</sup> It may be that he did not want to escalate the problem.

literati and scholars. When he died, he was eulogised by ash-Shareef ar-Radiy, leader of the Hâshimis and ‘Alawis, in immortal verse which included the words:

*Have you seen who they carried on their shoulders?  
Have you seen how the light of the gathering has been  
extinguished?*

*I did not know, before they placed you in the ground,  
That the ground could be more sublime than the mountains.*

After that, ash-Shareef continued to miss him and recite poetry, eulogising him on every occasion. Once he passed by his grave, burst into tears and said:

*I said to a caravan passing by,  
Come and I will show you a fading glory.  
I eulogised you, hoping that it would calm me down,  
But it only increased my grief.  
I know that weeping will not help,  
But still I have my hopes and wishes.*

In the study circles that were held in the presence of the caliphs, scholars would come together despite the differences in their religions and schools of thought. Al-Ma'moon had a study circle in which scholars of all religions and schools of thought would come together. He used to say to them: "Discuss whatever you want of knowledge, without each of you quoting his religious book as evidence, lest it provoke sectarian problems."

The same was true of other people's study circles.

Khalaf ibn al-Muthanna said: In Basrah, we saw ten people come together in a gathering; they have no peers in knowledge and intelligence in this world. They are: al-Khaleel ibn Aḥmad, the grammarian [a Sunni]; al-Humayri, the poet [a Shiite];

Ṣâliḥ ibn ‘Abdul Quddoos [a heretic and a dualist]; Sufyân ibn Majâshi’ [a Kharijite]; Bashshâr ibn Bird [a promiscuous Shu’oobi<sup>24</sup>]; Hammâd ‘Ajrad [a Shu’oobi heretic]; Ibn Ra’s al-Jâloot, the poet [a Jew]; Ibn Nazeer, the theologian [a Christian]; ‘Umar ibn al-Mu’ayyid [a Magian]; and Ibn Sinân al-Harrâni, the poet [a Sabian]. They used to meet and discuss poetry and current affairs. They would talk in a friendly atmosphere, such that one would hardly realize that there were great differences of religion and belief among them. This tolerance extended to houses and families, so much so that in one house there might be four brothers, one of whom was Sunni, the second Shiite, the third Kharijite and the fourth Mu’tazilite, yet they would live in perfect harmony. Or in one house there would be a pious brother and an immoral one. The pious one would devote himself to worship while the immoral one indulged in promiscuous behaviour.

Another example of religious tolerance in our civilization is sharing in the excitement and decoration of religious festivals. From the time of the Umayyad period, the Christians had their public celebrations, in which they would carry their crosses and their clergy would appear in their priestly garments, in the streets. The Patriarch Michael entered the city of Alexandria in a splendid celebration, with candles, crosses and the Gospels carried before him, and the priests crying out: “The Lord has sent to us a trustworthy shepherd who is the new Mark.” That happened at the time of Hishâm ibn ‘Abdul Malik.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Shu’oobi: A deviant sect, denounced by scholars such as Abu Ḥanefah, which had deviant ideas like their hatred of Arabs and Islamic culture.

<sup>25</sup> The practices in this and the following three paragraphs are impermissible since one of the conditions ‘Umar ibn al-Khattâb made on non-Muslims was that they could not openly observe their holidays. Certainly, rulers could not=

During the time of ar-Rasheed, it was customary for the Christians to have a great parade with the cross at the front; that was on the occasion of Easter.

Al-Maqdisi tells us in *Aḥsân at-Taqâseem* that the marketplaces in Sheerâz would be adorned for the Christian festivals. The Egyptians used to celebrate the onset of the Nile floods during the time of the Easter celebration.

Al-Maqreezi tells us in *al-Khutât* that during the time of the Ikshidid dynasty of Egypt, people used to hold great celebrations on the occasion of the Epiphany (commemoration of the baptism of Christ). In 330 AH, celebrations of the Epiphany were held on a splendid scale. Muhammad ibn Taghaj al-Ikhsheedi stayed in his palace on the island of al-Maneel with one thousand lamps lit around him. People followed his example and lit torches, lamps and candles. Boats were filled with thousands of Christians and Muslims; the rooftops and riverbanks were crowded with people, all wearing their finest clothes. Many of them had brought food and drink and placed them in vessels of gold and silver. That night, the roads remained open and most of the people immersed themselves in water, believing that bathing on the night of the Epiphany would protect them against sickness and disease.<sup>26</sup>

It is interesting to note that these expressions of friendship continued even during the Crusades, when the West launched historical attacks against the Muslim world in the name of the cross.

The traveller Ibn Jubayr tells us of his travels:

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=do so either, as doing so would lead to the corruption of faith. (Bukhari, Muslim and an-Nasâ'i)

<sup>26</sup> Imitating non-Muslims is impermissible in Islam. (Translator)

One of the strange things that are happening when the flames of conflict are burning between the Muslims and the Christians and two groups may face one another in a standoff, is that Muslim and Christian friends may visit one another without any objections. Caravans are still carrying goods from Egypt to Damascus through the Frankish lands with no obstacles. Muslims pay a tax to the Christians in their lands, and Christian merchants in the Muslim lands pay a tax on their goods, and the agreement between them is fair. The warriors are busy with their war, and the people are fine, and the world will go to the victor.

The level of religious tolerance in our civilization is something that has no equal in the history of the past ages. Western historians who respect the truth agree that this tolerance existed, and they commend it.

The famous modern historian Wells says, in his discussion of Islamic teaching:

It established great traditions of just interaction and it inspired in people a spirit of generosity and tolerance, as it is humane in character and its principles may be readily applied in real life. It created a group of people in whom there was little of the cruelty and oppression that overwhelm the world, when compared with the other groups that came before it...

He says of Islam: "It is filled with the spirit of kindness, tolerance and brotherhood."

Sir Mark Syce said, describing the Islamic Empire at the time of ar-Rasheed: "The Christians, idolaters, Jews and Muslims were equal, working in the service of the government."

Tarnoon says: "The religion had nothing to do with the work of poets and singers."

Levi-Provencal says in his book, *Islamic Spain in the Tenth Century*:

The scribe who wrote down contracts would often be a Christian or a Jew, and many Christians and Jews worked as civil servants.

Renaud says of the Arab campaigns in France, Switzerland, Italy and the islands of the Mediterranean:

The Muslims in the cities of Andalusia used to treat the Christians well, and the Christians used to respect the feelings of the Muslims, circumcise their children and refrain from eating pork.

Arnold says, speaking of religious schools of thought among the Christians:

But the principles of Islamic tolerance forbade such actions which imply oppression. It seems to us that the Muslims, unlike others, did not spare any effort to treat all the Christians under their rule with fairness and justice. For example, after the conquest of Egypt, the Jacobites took the opportunity of the end of Byzantine rule to take over the churches of the Orthodox, but the Muslims ultimately restored them to their rightful owners, after the Orthodox proved that they were the owners...

When we look at the tolerance which the Muslims showed to the Christians under their authority towards the beginning of the Islamic rule, we will realize that the notion of people becoming Muslim by 'the sword' cannot be believed.

We have gone into detail about the level of religious tolerance in our civilization because we want to refute the lies that the racist Westerners narrate about our history: that we were cruel, forced people to enter our religion and mistreated and persecuted non-Muslims. It would have been better for them not to open this door on themselves, because their acts of religious hatred against the Muslims during the Crusades in Spain and in the modern age should make them hang their heads in shame. Indeed, their shameful acts of persecution against one another are something that cannot be denied by any student of history, such as the slaughter of Catholics and Protestants, the Saint Bartholomew massacre, religious wars which the papacy launched against its opponents among the people of Europe, and the atrocities of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages. All of this constitutes irrefutable proof that Westerners are the most partisan and hate-filled people, who are against those who hold beliefs and opinions different from their own, even if they belong to the same race. It also proves that they knew nothing about religious tolerance throughout history right from the ancient times. Also, they are still controlled by this hateful religious discrimination against Muslims, operating under the transparent cover of politics and colonialism.

We believe that the best way to conclude this discussion of our tolerance and their intolerance is to quote one of the greatest Christian priests, who cannot be biased. The Patriarch of Antioch, Michael the Great, lived in the latter part of the twelfth century, after the Eastern churches had been under Islamic rule for five hundred years. He spoke about the tolerance of Muslims and how the Byzantines had persecuted the Eastern churches. He said:

This is the reason why the God of vengeance, Who alone has power and might, and Who transfers power from one human

nation to another as He wills, when He saw the evils of the Byzantines who had resorted to force and robbed our churches and confiscated our homes in all the areas they ruled, and they persecuted us mercilessly, He sent the sons of Ishmael (the Arabs) from the south (the Arabian Peninsula) to rid us of Byzantine oppression at their hands. We may have incurred some losses because of the Catholic churches being taken away from us and given to the Chalcedonians, and those churches have remained in their possession because when the cities surrendered to the Arabs, they decided that each Christian group should keep the churches that were in their possession, and at that time, the great church of Homs and the church of Hawrân had been taken from us. Nevertheless, it was no insignificant matter to rid ourselves of the cruelty of Byzantium and its persecution and zeal against us, and to find ourselves living in peace and security.

Do you not read what Gustave Le Bon said?

He said: The world had never seen conquerors who were as merciful and compassionate as the Arabs, nor any religion that was tolerant like their religion.

He was speaking the truth and being fair to the Muslims.





## CHAPTER 6

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### OUR ETIQUETTE DURING WAR

Now we will discuss one more unique aspect of the humane tendency in our civilization. Every nation practices good manners, kindness, mercy towards the weak, and tolerance towards neighbours and relatives during times of peace, irrespective of how barbaric the nation may be. However, very few nations can treat others well during a war: being kind to the enemy; showing mercy to women, children and the elderly; and exercising tolerance towards the conquered people. Not every leader has these attributes during war. The sight of blood provokes a lust for more blood, aggression fans the flames of hatred, and the intoxication of victory makes conquerors commit the most abhorrent acts of vengeance. This has been the history of all states, ancient and modern. Indeed, it has been the history of human beings ever since Cain shed the blood of his brother Abel, as described in the Qur'an in the following words:

﴿... إِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقْبِلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ يُقْبَلْ مِنَ الْآخَرِ قَالَ لَأَقْتُلَنَّكَ ۖ قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ﴾ (سورة المائدة : ٢٧)

﴿...when they both offered a sacrifice [to Allah], and it was accepted from one of them but was not accepted from the other. Said [the latter]: I will surely kill you. Said [the former]: Indeed, Allah only accepts from the righteous [who fear Him].﴾

(*Qur'an* 5: 27)

Consequently, history bestowed prominence on the leaders of our civilization, both military and civilian, conquerors and rulers. This is because they are unique among the great individuals of all civilizations. They are distinguished by their just and merciful humanity during the intense heat of the battle and in situations which would provoke the desire for vengeance and bloodshed. I swear that if history had not recorded this unique miracle in the history of warfare in such an irrefutable way, I would have termed it as a fable and myth.

Our civilization emerged at a time when the entire world was governed by the law of the jungle. The strong would kill the weak, and the armed would steal from the unarmed. War was a legitimate act recognised by all religions, nations and peoples, without limits or restrictions. There was no distinction between a just war and an unjust war. Everyone who was able to overpower a nation in its own land, force it to give up its beliefs and enslave its men and women, would do so, without any sense of guilt or shame. However, our civilization did not approve of this unjust system which had reduced humankind to the level of savage beasts. On the contrary, it declared that the basic principle governing relationships between nations was mutual respect and cooperation.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا<sup>١٣</sup>

«O humankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another...» (Qur'an 49: 13)

As a result, peace became the natural relationship between people.

If a nation insists on war and aggression against another, then the threatened nation must prepare to ward it off. If it fails to make such preparations, it will only encourage and facilitate aggression.

﴿وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ...﴾ (سورة الأنفال: ٦٠)

«And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy...» (Qur'an 8: 60)

On the other hand, if the aggressor nation gives up its evil intentions and desires peace and reconciliation, the other nation must also seek peace and strive for it.

﴿وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلَامِ فَاجْتَبِهْهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ...﴾ (سورة الأنفال: ٦١)

«And if they incline to peace, then incline to it [also] and rely upon Allah...» (Qur'an 8: 61)

However, if it insists on war, then force should be met with force, and aggression with aggression:

﴿وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقْتُلُونََكُمْ...﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٩٠)

«Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you...» (Qur'an 2: 190)

Consequently, the principles of our civilization are clarified: it is forbidden to wage a war simply to seize wealth and humiliate people; rather, war is prescribed in Islam for two purposes only:

1. To defend the beliefs and morals of the Ummah.
2. To defend the freedom, independence and safety of the people.

﴿وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ فَإِنْ آنَهَوْا فَلَا عُدْوَانَ إِلَّا عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٩٣)

«Fight them until there is no [more] fitnah and [until] worship is [acknowledged to be] for Allah. But if they cease, then there is to be no aggression except against the oppressors.» (Qur'an 2: 193)

The right to freedom of belief is not only limited to the nation that declares war. Instead, that nation must also guarantee the freedom of all beliefs and protect the places of worship of all religions:

﴿... وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُم بِبَعْضٍ لَّهُدِمَت صَوْمِعُ وَيَبْعُ وَصَلَوَاتُ وَمَسْجِدُ يُذْكَرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا...﴾ (سورة الحج: ٤٠)

«...And were it not that Allah checks the people, some by means of others, there would have been demolished monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of Allah is much mentioned...» (Qur'an 22: 40)

The most extraordinary principle that was proclaimed by our civilization is that we are obliged to defend the weak and oppressed from other people, just as we are obliged to defend our own freedom and dignity:

﴿وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ الظَّالِمِ أَهْلُهَا وَاجْعَل لَّنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ وَلِيًّا وَاجْعَل لَّنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ نَصِيرًا﴾ (سورة النساء: ٧٥)

«And what is [the matter] with you that you fight not in the cause

of Allah and [for] the oppressed among men, women, and children who say: Our Lord, take us out of this city of oppressive people and appoint for us from Yourself a protector and appoint for us from Yourself a helper?﴾

(Qur'an 4: 75)

A war that is declared to defend our faith, as well as freedom and peace, is the kind of war prescribed in Islam. It is a means of drawing closer to Allah (ﷻ). It is a war whose martyrs attain paradise. This is the war which our civilization describes as a war for the sake of Allah (ﷻ); anything else is war for the sake of oppression and corruption. How brilliant is the way in which the war that is permissible, in contrast with its concept prevalent among all the nations, has been mentioned in the following verse:

﴿الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ الطَّاغُوتِ فَقَاتِلُوا أَوْلِيَاءَ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطَانِ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا﴾ (سورة النساء: ٧٦)

﴿Those who believe fight in the cause of Allah, and those who disbelieve fight in the cause of Tāghoot. So fight against the allies of Satan. Indeed, the plot of Satan has ever been weak.﴾

(Qur'an 4: 76)

Our civilization declares war for the sake of Allah (ﷻ), that is, in the path of Allah (ﷻ). The path of Allah (ﷻ) is goodness, truth and dignity. In contrast, people declare war for the sake of falsehood and Satan, who represents evil, hatred and corruption. This is not the purpose of wars in our civilization. It is also not permissible to declare war for the sake of goodness and truth, and then commit acts of falsehood and evil. For this reason, one of the principles of war, according to our civilization, is that we should not fight anyone except those who fight us or commit aggression against us:

﴿... فَمَنْ أَعَدَّى عَلَيْكُمْ فَأَعِدُوا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا أَعَدَّى عَلَيْكُمْ...﴾ (١٩٤)

(سورة البقرة: ١٩٤)

«...So whoever has assaulted you, then assault him in the same way that he has assaulted you...» (Qur'an 2: 194)

If we overstep the boundary and fight against those who did not want to fight us, or harm those who have not harmed us, then we are transgressing and deviating from the purpose of humane warfare:

﴿وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعَدِّيْنَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٩٠)

«Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors.»

(Qur'an 2: 190)

﴿وَلَمَنْ أَنْصَرَ بَعْدَ ظُلْمِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ﴾ (٤١) ﴿إِنَّمَا السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَظْلِمُونَ النَّاسَ وَيَبْغُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ﴾ (٤٢)

(سورة الشورى: ٤١-٤٢)

«And whoever avenges himself after having been wronged — those have not upon them any cause [for blame]. The cause is only against the ones who wrong the people and tyrannize upon the earth without right. Those will have a painful punishment.»

(Qur'an 42: 41-42)

Once a war begins, we must not forget our principles. We should not be cruel, corrupt or oppressive; nor should we spread wanton destruction. Not at all! Humane warfare waged sincerely for the sake of Allah (ﷻ) must remain humane in its methods, even when fighting becomes intense.

For this reason, the teachings are unprecedented in history: Do not mutilate. Do not kill any young child or old man or woman. Do not cut down or burn any palm tree. Do not cut down any fruit-bearing tree. Do not slaughter a sheep, cow or camel unless it is for food. You will come across people who have devoted their lives to worship in their hermitages; leave them alone and leave whatever they have devoted themselves to.<sup>27</sup>

Do you not see how humane warfare should be? This is warfare prescribed for the sake of Allah (ﷻ) and not for purposes of evil and aggression. War should be governed by these humane and merciful principles, until it is ended by one of two things — either a truce or victory.

Peace treaties are inviolable, and it is obligatory to fulfil their conditions:

﴿وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ إِذَا عَاهَدْتُمْ وَلَا تَنْقُضُوا الْأَيْمَانَ بَعْدَ تَوْكِيدِهَا وَقَدْ جَعَلْتُمُ اللَّهَ عَلَيْكُمْ كَفِيلًا...﴾ (سورة النحل: ٩١)

﴿And fulfill the covenant of Allah when you have taken it, [O believers,] and do not break oaths after their confirmation while you have made Allah, over you, a witness...﴾ (Qur'an 16: 91)

On the other hand, victory is for the group which got angry for the sake of truth and died for its sake. Once victorious, they will only do that which will reinforce truth on the earth and prevent hatred and corruption among people:

﴿الَّذِينَ إِن مَكَّنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَاللَّهُ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ﴾ (سورة الحج: ٤١)

<sup>27</sup> From the advice issued by Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) to the army of Usamah (رضي الله عنه).



﴿[And they are] those who, if We give them authority in the land, establish prayer and give zakâh and enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong. And to Allah belongs the outcome of [all] matters.﴾  
 (Qur'an 22: 41)

As you can see, the aforementioned verse specifies the actions and mission of the victorious state: spiritual development, justice, cooperation in benefiting people, and striving against evil and corruption in the land.

These are the principles of war in our civilization, and this should be our attitude during war: justice, mercy and fulfilment of treaties.

Yet this, in our view, is not sufficient to prove the superiority of our peaceful civilization during war. Principles alone do not indicate a nation's nobility and humanity. How often have we seen nations proclaiming the loftiest principles for people, yet treating them in the cruellest, most debased manner, which totally lacks humanity and mercy? What the colonialists have done in our countries is no secret; in fact, the record of their atrocities and cruelty is well known to us. Let us examine the reality of how these principles were applied in our civilization. This will honour some and shame others. Indeed, we are distinguished from all other people through our principles only. We stand alone, with no other people or civilization sharing our humane tendencies.

First of all, let us start with the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), the leader of our civilization. He was the one who laid down its foundations and laws, as well as the true expression of its attitude, aims and mission. We do not know of any Prophet, Messenger or righteous person who was more tormented, persecuted and hurt in the course of his mission than the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). For thirteen years in Makkah, plots, persecution, insults and torments

were for him and his followers. Conspiracies were hatched against his life and the life of his Companions. After that, ten years in Madinah were filled with struggles and battles. The Prophet (ﷺ) never took off the garments of war until the Arabian Peninsula finally submitted in Islam shortly before his death. Those who fight wars, wield the sword, are fought against and are subjected to enmity and persecution usually harbour the strongest blood lust and the greatest thirst for vengeance. However, what was the attitude of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) during the wars he fought? How did the founder of the civilization apply the principles he proclaimed to people?

The Muslims were defeated at Uhud because they had gone against the command of the Messenger (ﷺ). His enemies surrounded him and sought to kill him, while his Companions prepared to lay down their lives to defend him. He emerged from the battle wounded. His molar teeth had been broken, his face had been cut, and two rings of chain mail had penetrated his cheek.

«Some of his Companions said to him: Why do you not pray against them, O Messenger of Allah? He replied: I was not sent as a curse; rather, I was sent as a caller and as a mercy. O Allah, guide my people, for they do not know.» (A *mursal*<sup>28</sup> hadith recorded by al-Bayhaqi)

These are words of truth, implying that they were forced to wage war; these are the words of a Prophet (ﷺ) who did not wage war out of a desire to shed blood. His only desire was to guide those who had gone astray.

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<sup>28</sup> A *mursal* hadith is a narration that one of the Successors (those who knew or met any of the Companions and transmitted hadiths from them) ascribes to the Prophet (ﷺ) without mentioning the Companion from whom he took it.

During the battle of Uḥud, the Lion of Allah, Ḥamzah (ﷺ), paternal uncle of the Prophet (ﷺ) and one of the most famous Arab heroes, was slain. He was killed by a man named Waḥshi, at the urging of Jubayr ibn Mut'im. Later on, Waḥshi became a Muslim. What did the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) do? He did no more than to pray for forgiveness for him.

«Waḥshi said: Jubayr bin Mut'im said to me: If you kill Ḥamzah to avenge my uncle, you will be set free... I reached Allah's Messenger (ﷺ). When he saw me, he asked: Are you Waḥshi? I replied: Yes. He asked: Was it you who killed Ḥamzah? I replied: What happened is what you have been told. He said: Can you hide your face from me? This is all that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said and did to the one who had killed his paternal uncle, Ḥamzah (ﷺ).» (Bukhari)

«During one of the battles, he saw that a woman from the enemy side had been killed. He got angry and denounced this killing, saying: Did I not forbid you to kill women? Such a person would not have fought.» (Bukhari)

This was the Messenger of Allah, who waged war according to these humane principles and followed them while fighting battles and leading troops.

When Makkah was conquered, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) entered it victorious, leading ten thousand heroes and troops. The Quraysh surrendered and stood beneath him at the door of the Kaaba, waiting for the ruling of the Messenger (ﷺ), after having resisted him for twenty-one years.

«One of the things that he said on that occasion was: O Quraysh, what do you think I am going to do with you?

They said: Good, for you are a noble brother, son of a noble brother.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: Today I say to you what my brother Yoosuf (عليه السلام) said before me:

﴿قَالَ لَا تَثْرِيبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ يَغْفِرُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ﴾

(سورة يوسف: ٩٢)

«He said: No blame will there be upon you today. Allah will forgive you; and He is the most merciful of the merciful.»

(*Qur'an* 12: 92)

Go, for you are free.» (Bayhaqi; a weak hadith according to al-Albâni)

This was Muhammad (ﷺ), the Messenger, the one who taught humankind to forgive and forget. He did not act like a murderous leader who was striving for his own glory and power, intoxicated with victory.

The stories of the wars and conquests of his Companions and the caliphs after him are similar. They applied these principles and did not lose control, even during the most intense moments of war. They did not forget their principles during the greatest victories of conquest.

Some of the inhabitants of Lebanon revolted against their governor 'Ali ibn 'Abdullâh ibn 'Abbâs, so he fought them and gained victory over them. He thought it would be wise to separate them by expelling some of them and sending them to other places. This is the least that a ruler would do nowadays, even in the most civilized of nations. Nevertheless, the reaction of Imam al-Awzâ'i, the imam and scholar of Syria (who was qualified to use his knowledge of the Qur'an and Sunnah to derive rulings on

matters not specifically mentioned in either source of Islamic law), was to write a letter to the governor of Lebanon, denouncing him for expelling some of the Lebanese from their villages in an attempt to punish those who had participated in the rebellion. Among the words he wrote to him were the following:

Among those non-Muslim citizens who have been expelled from the mountains of Lebanon are some who did not support those who rebelled, some of whom you killed and some you returned to their villages, as you know. How can you punish the masses for the sins of a few, expelling them from their homes and property, when the ruling of Allah is: «That no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another.» (*Qur'an* 53: 38), which is the best ruling to follow and the most appropriate command to heed?

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «Whoever mistreats any non-Muslim who has a treaty with the Muslims, or orders him to do more than he is able to, I will be his opponent on the Day of Resurrection.» (Narrated by Abu Dâwood and al-Bayhaqi; a reliable hadith according to al-Albâni)

The governor had no option but to let them return to their villages with honour and dignity.

I do not want to comment on this incident. It is sufficient for me to remind people of what the French did when we revolted against them in our country and what they are doing now to the inhabitants of Arab North Africa,<sup>29</sup> killing tens of thousands wholesale, destroying dozens of towns and villages with their inhabitants still inside, levelling them completely. It is sufficient for me to remind people of the atrocities the British committed in

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<sup>29</sup> This refers to the Algerian War of Independence, from 1954 to 1962. (Editor)

Palestine during the Arab revolts. These reminders are sufficient to draw attention to the point, namely, the superiority of our civilization in the field of war and conquest.

When ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdul ‘Azeez became the caliph, some people from Samarqand came to him and informed him that Qutaybah, the commander of the Islamic army, had conquered their city and brought Muslims to live there illegally and through trickery. ‘Umar wrote to his governor, telling him to appoint a judge to investigate what they had told him. If he ruled that the Muslims had to leave Samarqand, they would have to leave. The governor appointed Jamee’ ibn Hâdir al-Bâji as their judge to investigate their complaint. The judge, who was a Muslim, ruled that the Muslims should leave. Subsequently, the leader of the Muslim army had to warn them and inform them that there was no peace treaty, in accordance with the Islamic principles of warfare, so that the people of Samarqand would be prepared to fight the Muslims without being caught off guard. When the people of Samarqand saw this and realised that never before in history had such justice been carried out by a state, in opposition to its own army and the army’s commander, they said: “This is a nation which should not be fought, for its rule is a mercy and a blessing.” They insisted that the Muslim army stay, and they agreed that the Muslims should live with them. Imagine this: an army conquers a city and enters it. The vanquished complain to the conquering state, whose judge rules against the victorious army and commands it to leave and not enter the city again without the approval of its people. Have you ever read about any war in history, ancient or modern, in which the combatants operated according to the principles of morality and truth as the armies of our civilization have done? I know of no other nation of the world that is like this.

When our victorious armies conquered Damascus, Homs and other Syrian cities, they took a sum of money from their people, in a peaceful manner, in return for protecting and defending them. When Heraclius gathered his forces to engage in a decisive battle against them, our leaders thought that they should leave all the conquered cities and gather in one place to fight the Romans. Thus, our army prepared to leave Homs, Damascus and the other cities. Khâlid (ﷺ) gathered the people of Homs, Abu ‘Ubaydah (ﷺ) gathered the people of Damascus, and other leaders gathered the people of the other cities, and they told them: “We took money from you on the basis that we would protect you and defend you, but now we are leaving you and cannot defend you; here is your money, which we are returning to you.” The people of the cities said: “May Allah cause you to return safely and grant you victory, for by Allah, your rule and justice is more beloved to us than the injustice and oppression of the Romans. By Allah, if they had been in your place they would not have given us back anything they had taken. Rather, they would have taken everything that they could carry with them.”

Yes, they would have done the same as the armies in the modern age. When they are forced to leave a city, they do not leave behind anything that could benefit the enemy. Have you ever heard of such a thing? By Allah (ﷻ), if I did not believe in the prevalence of principles and morality, or if I was one of those who subjugate principles to political aims as the leaders of the modern age do, I would have stated that the leaders of our army had taken the idea of adhering to principles and morals to the degree of naiveté. Of course, the fact is they were true believers who hated to say that which they would not do.

During the wars waged by the Tartars against Syria, many Jews, Christians and Muslims were captured as prisoners of war. Shaykh al-Islâm Ibn Taymiyah intervened with the Tartar leader concerning the prisoners and their release. The Tartar leader said that he would free Muslim prisoners only, not the Christians or Jews. Shaykh al-Islâm rejected that offer and said: "You have to release all the Jewish and Christian prisoners, too, for they are living under our protection. We will not leave behind any prisoner of our own religion or living under our protection."

Have you read about the Crusades which the Westerners launched against us during the Middle Ages? Have you read about how we kept our word, while they broke theirs? How we forgave, while they took revenge? How we saved lives, while they indulged in slaughter until blood ran knee-deep? They actually felt ecstatic because of that.

When the Crusaders reached Ma'arrat an-Nu'mân during the second Crusade, they besieged it until its inhabitants were forced to surrender. They had received a promise from the leaders of the campaign that their lives, property and honour would be protected. However, as soon as the Crusaders entered the city, they began to commit atrocities that would turn children's hair white. Some European historians who were present during this campaign estimated the number of casualties (men, women and children) to be one hundred thousand.

Then the Crusaders moved on to Jerusalem and besieged it. Its people thought that they were defeated and had no way out, so they asked the campaign leader, Tancred, to guarantee their safety and the safety of their property. He gave them his banner to raise over *al-Masjid al-Aqṣâ* (the 'Farthest Mosque', mentioned in the Qur'an 17: 1), where they could flee for safety. Then they entered



the city, and how terrible and cruel was the massacre they carried out! The inhabitants of Jerusalem fled to al-Masjid al-Aqṣâ, where they raised the banner of safety, until it was filled with old men, children and women. However, they were slaughtered like sheep, with blood flowing from the mosque until it reached the knees of horses. Everyone in the city was slaughtered, until the streets were filled with crushed skulls, severed arms and legs, and mutilated bodies. Our historians have stated that the number of people killed inside al-Masjid al-Aqṣâ alone was seventy thousand, including a large number of imams, devoted worshippers and ascetics, along with women and children. European historians do not deny these atrocities; in fact, many of them even speak proudly about them.

Ninety years after this massacre, Ṣalâḥ ad-Deen (Saladin) conquered Jerusalem, and what did he do? There were more than one hundred thousand Westerners in the city. He guaranteed that their lives and property would be safe. He let them leave in return for a small amount of money to be paid by those who were able to pay, and gave them forty days to leave. Eighty-four thousand left and went to join their brothers in Acre and elsewhere. He let many of the poor leave without having to pay anything, and his brother, al-Mâlik al-‘Âdil, paid the ransom on behalf of two thousand men. He treated women in a manner unmatched by even the kindest, victorious king of the modern age. When the Frankish Patriarch wanted to leave, he let him go, taking the wealth of the churches, the Dome of the Rock, al-Masjid al-Aqṣâ and the church of the Resurrection with him. The value of that wealth is known only to Allah (ﷻ). Some of Ṣalâḥ ad-Deen’s inner circle suggested that he should seize that vast wealth, but the Sultan replied: “I will not betray him.” He did not take from him any more than he had taken from each individual.

What makes this humane action on the part of Ṣalâḥ ad-Deen even more astonishing is that when he conquered Jerusalem, he sent troops to escort the masses of Westerners who had left the city to join their brothers. This was to protect them and ensure that they reached the Crusader strongholds in Tyre and Sidon safely, even though he was still at war with them. Can you believe this?

Read the rest of the story: a large number of women, who had paid the ransom, gathered and went to plead with the Sultan, telling him that they were wives, mothers or daughters of some of the knights and soldiers who had been taken prisoner or killed; they now had no one to support them and no one to turn to. When he saw them weeping, he wept with them, filled with compassion. He issued commands to search for their male relatives among the prisoners; those who were found were released and returned to their women. He gave a large sum of money to the widows, which made them speak highly of him wherever they went. Next, he allowed those whom he had released to leave with their wives and children to join their brothers in Tyre and Acre. At the same time, some of the poor Westerners who had left Jerusalem after the conquest had gone to Antioch, where the Crusader ruler refused to accept them. They wandered around, not knowing where to go, until the Muslims gave them refuge. A group of them went to Tripoli, which was under Latin rule, but the people refused to accept them; they threw them out and stole the goods that the Muslims had given them.

The story of Ṣalâḥ ad-Deen and his treatment of the Westerners during the Crusades is akin to a legend. The Westerners themselves still admire the noble attitude and sublime conduct of this memorable hero; had they not done so, we could have accused our historians of exaggerating his virtues. However, the

Westerners themselves have reported that when news reached Şalâh ad-Deen that Richard the Lionheart — the greatest and bravest of Crusader leaders — was sick, Şalâh ad-Deen sent his own private doctor to him, bringing medicines and fruits that the Crusader leader could not obtain. This was during a time when war was still raging between them and their armies were in conflict. They are the ones who tell the story of a Western woman who threw herself down in front of the Sultan Şalâh ad-Deen's tent, weeping, wailing and complaining that two soldiers from his army had taken away her child. Şalâh ad-Deen wept and sent his men to look for the child; when they found him, they handed him over to the mother. She was then sent to her camp with a guard from his army to ensure that she arrived safely. What remains to be said after this?

When Sultan Muhammad al-Fâtih conquered Constantinople (now Istanbul), he entered the church of Aya Sofia, where the men of the church had fled for safety. He received them kindly and reassured them that he would protect them. He asked the frightened Christians in the church to return to their homes in safety, then he organised the affairs of the Christians. He gave them the right to follow their own church and religious laws as well as their own customs with regard to their personal affairs. He allowed the priests to elect their patriarch, and they elected Janadius. The Sultan celebrated his election in the same splendid manner as this event had been celebrated during the Byzantine period. He told him: "You will be Patriarch on the basis of friendship between us at all times and in all circumstances. You will enjoy the same rights and privileges as your predecessors." After that, he gave him a beautiful horse and a special guard of Janissaries (who formed the private guard of the Sultan). The Pashas (high-ranking officials of the Ottoman state) accompanied

him to the place that had been prepared for him. Thereafter, Sultan al-Fâtîh announced his recognition of the laws of the Orthodox Church. He put them under his care; he also collected or bought all the sacred relics of the saints that had been looted on the day of the conquest and handed them over to the churches and monasteries.

Sultan Muhammad al-Fâtîh did this even though there were no peace treaties or conditions between him and the Christians during the time of the conquest that obliged him to do so. On the contrary, he offered this protection and care voluntarily, which made them feel safer and more secure. They also had more religious freedom under the new Islamic state than they had had when they were under the rule of the Byzantine state.

The Ottoman Sultans continued to treat their Christian subjects just as well in the neighbouring countries that they conquered, such as Greece and Bulgaria. The way they treated them was unmatched in the rest of Europe at that time. Even the followers of Calvin in Hungary and Transylvania, and the Unitarian Christians in Transylvania, always preferred to be under the Turkish rule rather than to fall into the hands of the Hapsburg dynasty. The Protestants in Silesia longed for Turkish rule and were willing to secure their religious freedom by submitting to Muslim rule. While the Muslims treated the Christians under their rule with this generous attitude of religious tolerance, the Christians in Europe were suffering from the harshness of their rulers and the fanaticism of religious groups against one another, with widespread bloodshed, fear and terror. Read what the Patriarch of Antioch, Macarius, said in the seventeenth century about the atrocities which the Polish Catholics carried out against their Orthodox brethren:

We have all shed many tears for the thousands of martyrs slain during the last forty or fifty years at the hands of those miserable heretics and enemies of the faith (meaning the Catholics). The number of slain may be seventy thousand. What traitors! What filthy demons! What hearts of stone! What did the nuns and women do? What sin did these boys, girls and infants commit that they should kill them? Why do I call them the accursed Poles? Because they have shown themselves to be more savage and more decadent than the corrupt idol worshippers. That is because of the hard-heartedness they have shown in dealing with the Christians, thinking that they will erase the name of Orthodoxy thereby. May God cause the Turkish state to abide forever, for they take the jizyah that they have imposed, but they have nothing to do with other religions. They do not care whether their subjects are Christians or Nazarenes, Jews or Samaritans, whereas these accursed Poles are not content only to take taxes and tithes from their Christian brothers, even though they agreed to serve them willingly, rather they subjected them to the control of the oppressive Jews, the enemies of Christ, who did not even allow them to build churches and did not leave alive even one priest who knows the teachings of their religion.

While discussing the respect which Sultan Muhammad al-Fâtih showed towards Aya Sofia and the rights of the Christians in Constantinople, I must also mention what the Crusaders did when they came from Europe and took over Constantinople in 1204 CE. Read what Pope Innocent III said, describing what they did to their Orthodox brethren:

The followers of Christ and the supporters of his religion, who should have wielded their swords against the greatest enemy of

Christendom (meaning Islam), have shed sacred Christian blood and have swum in a sea of blood. They did not respect religion, age or gender; they commit adultery in broad daylight. Nuns, virgins and mothers have been subjected to the bestiality of the troops. They are not content with seizing the treasures of the emperor or plundering the wealth of individuals; they have seized the church lands and treasures; they have violated the sanctity of the churches and stolen their icons, crosses and sacred relics of the saints.

Read what the historian, Charles Dale, says:

The drunken soldiers entered the church of Saint Sofia, destroying holy books and stepping on the images of the martyrs. A prostitute sat on the throne of the patriarch, raising her voice in song. Works of art have been destroyed, and statues melted down to make coins.

One of the monks who witnessed this tragic event said: "The followers of Muhammad would not have treated the city as the soldiers of Christ did." Indeed, the Muslims did not do this when they conquered the city, as we can see from the actions of Sultan Muhammad al-Fâtiḥ. Because they were Muslims, they did not stoop to the iniquitous and primitive level of religious prejudice which the Catholics inflicted on their Orthodox brethren.

I do not want to dwell on the comparisons between the manner of the conquering Muslims in Andalusia and the victorious Spanish in Granada. Muslims, again, meted out good treatment to the conquered people, expressed mercy towards them and took care of their affairs amiably. In contrast is the attitude of the Spanish when they took over Granada [the last Muslim kingdom in Andalusia], after having given the Muslims sixty-odd promises to respect their religion, mosques, wealth and honour. They did

not keep any of their promises, nor did they refrain from shedding blood, killing people and stealing their wealth. In 1524, barely thirty-two years after the fall of Granada, the pope issued a command ordering that all the mosques in Spain be converted into churches. Barely four years after that, not a single Muslim was left in Spain. See how they kept their promises, and compare it with how we kept ours.

It is strange, indeed, that their cruelty and breaking of promises was not exclusive to their relations with Muslims. They were cruel and hard-hearted in every country they conquered, in the East and in the West. They were cruel and hard-hearted with every weak person they defeated, whether Muslim or Christian. They themselves have spoken about their cruelty.

The priest Odo of Deuil, one of the monks of Saint Denis, who was the personal priest of Louis VII and accompanied him on the Second Crusade, spoke about some of the things he saw. He said:

While the Crusaders were attempting to travel by land across Asia Minor to Jerusalem, they were defeated by the Turks in the mountain pass of Fareejiya in 1148. They reached the coastal city of Attalia with great difficulty. Those who were able to pay the high price demanded by the Greek merchants managed to cross the sea to Antioch, leaving the sick and wounded and masses of pilgrims at the mercy of their treacherous Greek allies. The Greeks had taken the sum of five hundred marks from Louis on the condition that they would supply guards to protect the pilgrims and to take care of the sick, until they recovered enough to travel and join their comrades. However, soon after the army departed, the Greeks told the Turks where the unarmed pilgrims were, and they watched silently as hunger, sickness and the arrows of the

enemy brought death and destruction to them. Out of despair, a group of three or four thousand tried to escape, but the Turks, who had reached their camp, attacked it in order to complete their victory, so they besieged them, utterly destroying them. Those who escaped death would have fallen into despair, were it not for the fact that their miserable situation made some of the Muslims take pity on them. They helped the sick, poor and hungry who were on the brink of death, giving them generous aid. Some of them even bought the Frankish currency that the Greeks had squeezed out of the pilgrims by force or by deceit, and distributed it generously among the needy. There was a vast difference between the compassionate treatment that the pilgrims received from the infidels [meaning the Muslims] and the cruelty that they suffered from their Christian brethren among the Greeks who forced them to do hard labour, beat them and stole from them what little property they had left. Many of them even embraced the religion of their saviours of their own free will. As the ancient historian said: They hated their brothers in faith, who had treated them so harshly and found safety among the infidels [the Muslims], who were compassionate towards them.

Some say that more than three thousand people joined the ranks of the Turks. Ah, the mercy of the Muslims is worse than treachery. They gave them bread but took away their beliefs. Even though it is certain that they never forced anyone among them to change their religion, all they did was to offer some services.

Why should we go so far back in history when we can see the behaviour of the Westerners in the two World Wars and their cruelty during those wars? We can see their stance in the Arab and Muslim East, which speaks of the extent of their cruelty, which is



characteristic of their behaviour and rule and of the extent of their hypocrisy when they declare their humanity and mercy in international organizations. At the same time, they manifest their savagery and cruelty in their wars, in their colonies and in the countries which are subjected to their rule. Even if some people try to find excuses for the Westerners' atrocities in the Middle Ages by saying that they were a people who were not yet civilized, what is their excuse now? They are the leaders of civilization and the teachers of the world in the fields of science, art and invention. The issue, in our view, is the essential nature, which is stronger than any affectation of character. The Westerners are still carrying, in their hearts and natures, the characteristics of the days when they were barbaric and idolatrous tribes. These characteristics were hidden behind a façade of religion during the Middle Ages, and religion was blamed for their savagery. Now they are hiding behind a civilized façade, so 'peace and stability' or 'civility and etiquette' are blamed for their cruelty. Throughout the ages, they have remained the same: dwellers of the jungle, shedders of blood, worshippers of power and beasts of fanaticism. How can they talk about our cruelty during our conquests and their mercy during colonialism? By Allah (ﷻ), we and they are different, as the poet has said:

*When we had power over the world,  
 forgiveness was our characteristic.  
 When they had power, blood flowed freely.  
 This difference comes as no surprise,  
 For every vessel leaks the substance that is in it.*

## CHAPTER 7

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### KINDNESS TO ANIMALS

*This* is an interesting aspect of our amazing civilization, even though it may not be unusual during the times in which we live. Until the modern age, humankind did not think that animals were entitled to any share of kindness or mercy. Some modern nations still entertain themselves by killing animals during their festivals and celebrations as well as for sport. Our civilization is distinguished by its principles as well as its compassionate, sensitive and humane feelings, unheard of in any other civilization before or since, until the present day. This aspect is kindness and compassion towards animals, a mercy which draws attention and generates admiration and astonishment. The following are some examples.

The first thing that our civilization declares regarding kindness to animals is that the world of animals, just like the world of humans, has its own characteristics, nature and feelings:

﴿وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَائِرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمٌّ أَمْثَلُكُمْ ...﴾ (سورة الأنعام: ٣٨)

(سورة الأنعام: ٣٨)

﴿And there is no creature on [or within] the earth or bird that flies

with its wings except [that they are] communities like you...»  
 (Qur'an 6: 38)

Animals are entitled to kindness and mercy just like humans.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Anyone who shows mercy, even to an animal meant for slaughtering, will be shown mercy by Allah on the Day of Rising.» (Bukhari)

Mercy towards animals may even cause a person to enter paradise: «The Prophet (ﷺ) said: While a man was walking on the road, he was overcome with intense thirst. Soon, he found a well. He went down into it, drank and came out. There he saw a dog which was panting and biting the dust on the ground (in a vain search for water). The man said: This dog is suffering from thirst as I was. So, he went back down into the well, filled his shoe with water, held it in his mouth, climbed out and gave the dog some water to drink. Allah appreciated [his action] and forgave [his sins].

People said: O Messenger of Allah, will we be rewarded [for how we treat] animals?

He replied: In serving every living being, there is a reward.» (Bukhari, Muslim, Mālik, Aḥmad and Abu Dāwood)

By the same token, cruelty towards animals may lead a person to hell:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «A woman entered hellfire because of a cat which she tied up. She neither fed it nor let it out to eat the vermin of the earth.» (Bukhari and Muslim)

The Sharia goes even further in enjoining mercy towards animals. It forbids staying too long on an animal's back when it is standing still.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Do not take the backs of your animals as chairs.» (Bukhari and Muslim)

Islam forbids starving animals and making them thin and weak. «Once the Prophet (ﷺ) passed a camel whose belly was sticking to its back [because of hunger]. He said: Fear Allah with regard to these dumb animals. Ride them when they are fit, and slaughter and eat them when they are fit.» (Abu Dâwood and Ibn Khuzaymah; a sound hadith according to al-Albâni)

It is also forbidden to exhaust them by making them do more work than they are able to do. «Once the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) entered a garden belonging to a man from among the Anṣâr. Inside the garden was a camel. When the camel saw the Prophet (ﷺ), it moaned and tears flowed from its eyes. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) came to it and wiped away its tears. He asked: Who is the owner of this camel? Its owner said: I am, O Messenger of Allah. The Prophet (ﷺ) said to him: Do you not fear Allah concerning this animal which Allah has given you? It has complained to me that you are starving and exhausting it [meaning: wearing it out by making it work too much].» (Abu Dâwood; a sound hadith according to al-Albâni)

It is also forbidden to hunt animals for mere sport or entertainment. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Whoever kills a small bird for no purpose, it will raise its voice to Allah on the Day of Resurrection, saying: O Lord, so-and-so killed me for no purpose; he did not kill me for any useful purpose.» (an-Nasâ'i and Ibn Hîbbân; a weak hadith according to al-Albâni)

It is also forbidden to use animals as targets in order to learn how to shoot. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) cursed those who took any living being as a target (Bukhari and Muslim). It is also forbidden to incite animals to fight one another or to mark their

faces by branding or with fire (that is, marking them to distinguish them from other animals).

Once the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) passed a donkey that had been branded on its face, and he said: «May Allah curse the one who branded it.» (Muslim)

If the animal can be eaten, being merciful towards it means sharpening the blade, giving it water to drink before slaughter and waiting for a while after slaughtering before skinning it.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Allah has prescribed proficiency in all things. So, if you kill, kill well, and if you slaughter, slaughter well. Let each one of you sharpen his blade, and let him spare the animal he slaughters from suffering.» (Muslim, Abu Dâwood, Mâlik and at-Tirmidhi).

Indeed, making the animal lie down for slaughter before sharpening the blade is a form of cruelty that is impermissible.

«Once the Prophet (ﷺ) saw a man laying a sheep on the floor in order to slaughter it. He made it stay still by putting his feet on its neck, while he was still sharpening his blade and the sheep was looking at him. The Prophet (ﷺ) got very upset at this scene and asked: Do you want to make your sheep die twice? Shouldn't you have sharpened your blade before you lay it down?» (Recorded by at-Ṭabarâni and al-Ḥâkim with a trustworthy chain of narrators)

Consider this amazing account of mercy towards animals, one of the most eloquent indicators of the spirit of our civilization.

«Once, while travelling, the Prophet (ﷺ) went to relieve himself. During that time, some of his Companions found a redstart bird with two chicks; the Companions took the chicks away from their mother, who started to circle them, flapping her

wings. When the Prophet (ﷺ) returned and saw it, he looked at his Companions and asked: Who has distressed this bird over her chicks? Return the chicks to the bird!» (Recorded by Abu Dâwood with a sound chain of narrators)

«Once the Prophet (ﷺ) saw an ant's nest that had been set on fire. He asked: Who burnt this nest? One of his Companions answered: I did. He got very upset and said: No one is allowed to punish with fire except the Lord of fire!» (Recorded by Abu Dâwood with a sound chain of narrators)

In light of these teachings, Muslim jurists issued rulings of kindness towards animals; such rulings had never even crossed human minds before. They stated that it is obligatory for an animal's owner to spend on it. If the owner refuses, he or she should be forced to sell it, spend on it, let it go to a place where it can safely find its food, or slaughter it (if it is an animal whose meat may be eaten). They went further than that, with some saying: "If a blind cat comes to a person's house, that person is obliged to spend on it because it is unable to fend for itself."

They forbade forcing an animal to carry more than it is able to bear. They imposed legal consequences for the one who hires an animal to carry a load, or for riding, and then makes it carry more than it is able to bear; they said that such individuals should pay compensation to the animal's owner. They determined the amounts that mules and donkeys are able to carry. It is interesting to note that one jurist's amounts were different than another's, so he commented: "This is fair for the mule, but it is unfair for the donkey." With regard to harm caused by one animal to another, there are no consequences for the animal itself. The animal is not punished for any damage that it causes; instead, the owner is

punished, especially if he or she was careless and failed to look after the animal or tie it up.

These are the principle of kindness to animals in our civilization and laws. But how were these principles applied in real life?

«When the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was on one of his journeys, he heard an Anṣâri woman cursing her she-camel, which she was riding. He denounced the woman for doing this and said: Take off [the luggage] that is on it and leave it alone, for it is cursed. The she-camel was left to wander freely, and no one touched it.» (Muslim)

Once ‘Umar (رضي الله عنه) passed a man who was dragging a sheep by its leg to slaughter it. He said to him: “Woe to you; lead it to its death gently.”

Similarly, our civilization applied the principles of kindness to animals and took care of them at the state level as well as in social institutions.

With regard to care by the state, there is no clearer evidence of that than the fact that our caliphs used to make public announcements telling people to be kind to animals and not to hurt or harm them.

In one of his letters, ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdul ‘Azeez instructed his governors to forbid people from making their horses run for no purpose.

He wrote to the officials in charge of roads (a position similar to that of traffic control today) telling them that they should not allow anyone to use heavy reins on their animals or to hit them with whips that had iron tips.

Part of the job of the *muhtasib* (an official whose role was similar in some ways to that of a modern policeman) was to stop people from making their animals carry more than they were able to bear, or tormenting or beating them while travelling. If they saw anyone doing that, they would reprimand and punish them.

He wrote: The *muhtasib* should force them to follow the rules because of the interests served by doing so. They should not force animals to carry more than they are able to bear, or drive them in a harsh manner when they are carrying loads, or beat them harshly, or make them stand in public areas with loads on their backs. All of these actions are forbidden by the pure Sharia. They have to remember that Allah is always watching, with regard to feeding their animals, so they should let them eat their fill and not give them bad quality feed or too little.

Animals had a great share in public institutions. It is sufficient for us to note that in the records of ancient religious endowments, we find some dedicated to the treatment of sick animals or care for old animals that could no longer work. One example is al-Marj al-Akhdar [where the Damascus soccer stadium now stands]. This was a *waqf* (religious endowment) for disabled horses whose owners had refused to provide and care for them because they could no longer benefit from them; they were cared for on this land until they died. Another *waqf* of Damascus was for cats. It was a place where they were fed, cared for and provided shelter. Hundreds of fat, well-cared-for cats used to gather in the house set up by this *waqf*, where they were fed daily. They stayed here, only moving to exercise.

These examples demonstrate the spirit of the people whose kindness towards animals reached an extent unknown elsewhere. Perhaps the most eloquent example of our people's spirit is the



great Companion Abu ad-Dardâ' (ؓ), who said as his camel was dying: "O camel, do not complain about me to your Lord, for I never forced you to carry more than you were able to bear."

Another Companion, 'Adiyy ibn Hâtim (ؓ), used to break bread into crumbs for the ants and say: "They are our neighbours, and they have rights over us."

The great imam Abu Is-hâq ash-Shirâzi was walking down the road with one of his companions, and a dog came up to him. His companion shouted at it to make it go away, but the shaykh told him not to and said to him: "Do you not know that the road is for us and for him?"

We cannot appreciate this outstanding phenomenon in our civilization, and its humane stance towards animals, until we realise how animals were treated in ancient and medieval societies. Let's take a look at the stance of other nations in cases where animals caused damage and in cases where animals were subjected to torment.

The first thing to note is the fact that nothing can be found in the teachings of those people that enjoins kindness and mercy towards animals. Accordingly, we find that animals had no rights that obliged their owners to spend on them or take care of them.

Moreover, what we have discovered is that animals were held accountable and responsible if they caused any damage by their actions, just like an accountable, sane adult. This is one of the strangest features of ancient and medieval times, which lasted up to the nineteenth century. Animals would be judged as people are judged, and sentences of imprisonment, expulsion and death would be passed against them, just as they were passed against human criminals.

Jewish law says: If a bull gores a man or a woman, and it leads to the death of the person gored, the bull must be stoned, and its meat is forbidden to eat. If the bull was not known for goring, the owner of the bull is not responsible. On the other hand, if the bull was known for goring, and people had warned the owner, but he did not take precautions, and the bull caused the death of a man or woman, then the punishment for the bull is stoning, and the punishment for its owner is execution.

A second case in which an animal may be punished under Jewish law is when a man or woman engages in bestiality with an animal, in which case the animal and the man or woman are both to be killed.

According to the laws of ancient Greece, there was a court specifically to pass judgement on animals and inanimate objects that caused the death of a human. This court was called the Prytaneion, which was the name of the place where its sessions were held. Plato mentioned in his book of laws:

If an animal kills a human being, the family of the slain person has the right to make a claim against the animal in the court. The next of kin may choose the judges from among the farmers. If it is proven that the animal committed the crime, then it must be killed in retaliation, and its carcass thrown outside the city. An exception is made in the case of combat between a human and an animal in the public arena, in which case there are no such consequences. If an inanimate object falls on a human being and kills him, the next of kin of the victim chooses a judge from among his neighbours to pass judgement against the inanimate object that it should be thrown out beyond the city limits.

In their view, the responsibility of animals was not limited to cases of killing; animals were similarly responsible in cases of injury that did not lead to death. If a dog bit a man, the owner of the dog had to hand his animal over to the injured party, muzzled and bound, so that he might take revenge on it in whatever manner he wanted, by killing it, torturing it or whatever. Similarly, an animal could be punished for the crimes of the owner or members of the owner's family, in some cases. If a man was sentenced to death for a crime that he had committed against the religion or the state, then he, along with his family, his animals and his possessions, would be subject to a sentence of burning, destruction or confiscation.

The laws of the ancient Romans included a clause that dictated execution for an ox and its owner if, while ploughing, the ox moved the boundary marker which marked the line between the field being ploughed and the neighbouring field. The punishment for a dog that bit a person was that it had to be handed over to the person who had been bitten, for them to do whatever they wanted with it. A similar rule applied in the case of an animal that had grazed on grass that did not belong to its owner.

Punishments for animals belonging to the ancient Germans were similar to those of the Romans and Greeks.

In ancient Persia, the situation was even stranger. If a rabid dog bit a lamb and killed it, or bit and injured a person, its right ear would be cut off. If it happened again, its left ear would be cut off. On the third instance, its right foot would be cut off; on the fourth, its left foot, and on the fifth, its tail would be removed.

In the thirteenth century European Middle Ages, France was the first Christian European nation to adopt the principle that animals were responsible and could be punished for their crimes

by courts. The courts were organised along the same lines as courts that passed judgement on humans. At the end of the fourteenth century, Sardinia adopted similar principles, followed by Belgium in the fifteenth century, and Holland, Germany, Italy and Sweden in the mid-sixteenth century. Among some people of Sicily, these principles remained in force until the nineteenth century.

The animal courts of Europe dealt with claims made against the animals by people who had been injured by them or by the public prosecutor. Representatives would speak in defence of the animal offender. The court might even demand that the animals be detained as a precaution. Then judgement would be passed, and the sentence carried out in front of a group of people, just as in the case of humans. The sentence might be execution by stoning, beheading or burning and might entail cutting off some limbs before execution. Certainly, no one should think that these courts were held in jest or as a form of entertainment. On the contrary, they were quite serious, as is indicated by reports of the reasons why judgement was passed against animals. For example: "A sentence of execution is passed against the animal so that justice may be done," or "It is sentenced to hang as a punishment for the bestial crimes that it has committed."

It is interesting to note here that one of the reasons why the Europeans subjected animals to trials was their transgression of natural laws. An animal would be accused of witchcraft, which was a crime punishable by burning with fire. They used to hold great celebrations when punishments were carried out on animals. The executioners would bring pieces of wood and place them in the middle of a public square; then they would bring the cats against which sentences had been passed, each one in an iron cage. When the time for the execution came, some priests,

accompanied by judges, came forward one by one, each carrying a flaming torch in his hands. One of the judges would order that the cats be thrown into the fire until they were reduced to ashes, as a punishment for practicing witchcraft.

It is worth mentioning here some of the most famous animal cases in medieval Europe. One of the most interesting and well-known is the case of rats in the French town of Autun in the sixteenth century. The rats were accused of gathering in the streets in a most disturbing manner.<sup>30</sup> A French lawyer, Chassenée, came forward to defend them and asked for a delay because the rats were unable to attend. The reasons given were because there were nursing mothers as well as sick and incapacitated individuals among them, but it was said that they would be able to come and attend the court if they were given a delay. The court agreed to postpone the trial until a specific date, but when the time came, the rats did not attend. The lawyer for the defence told the court that the mice wanted to comply with the order and attend the court, but they were afraid that they might be harmed by the cats if they did. The head of the court replied by saying that they had to protect the lives of the accused. The lawyer asked the court to issue orders for the detention of all the cats of the town before the rats came through the streets, so they would feel safe and secure. The court agreed to this request because it was just and fair; it issued orders for the cats and dogs to be prevented from walking outside, so the rats could be safe when they came to court. The people of the town refused to carry out these orders, and the court was forced to rule that the rats were innocent because they had been denied the legal means of defence. The lawyer became very famous because of this case, but we do not know whether or not he took any fee from

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<sup>30</sup> and of destroying the barley crop. (Editor)

the rats. Perhaps his fee was a promise from them that they would not eat his books and papers.

One of the strangest animal cases in the Middle Ages was that of the rooster which had laid an egg. A claim was made against this rooster in the Swiss city of Basel in 1474, for laying an egg. According to the European custom of the time, this was a heinous crime, because they believed that witches sought roosters' eggs to use for their devilish purposes. The rooster was brought to court. Its lawyer defended it by asking how the rooster could be responsible for an event over which it had no control. Unfortunately, the court did not accept this point of view; it decreed that the rooster should be executed<sup>31</sup> as a lesson to the other roosters.

In 1495, there was another strange case involving animals in France. The vineyard owners in the province of St. Julien made a claim against the weevils, accusing them of destroying the vineyards, trees, industry and trade. Two of the greatest lawyers took the case to defend the insects. The case lasted for four years until, in the end, the vintners became exasperated with the delay. They decided to give the insects their own piece of land where they could eat as many crops and trees as they wanted.

This is the contrast between our civilization's attitude towards animals and the attitude of other nations. It becomes clear that our civilization is distinguished by two features which were absent from the nations of the past and from some of the modern nations.

1. Public institutions were established to care for and treat animals, guaranteeing them a safe life when they became weak, sick or old.

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<sup>31</sup> by burning at the stake (Editor)

2. Animal courts were unknown in our civilization. Our civilization endorsed the idea that animals are not criminally responsible, thirteen hundred years before modern Western civilization came to the same conclusion. Cruelty towards animals, such as the practice of making animals fight one another, was unknown in our civilization. Yet this practice was officially sanctioned in ancient Greece and Rome, and it is still prevalent in Spain, where bullfights are held during festivities. This is undoubtedly a bestial leftover of the abhorrent practices of Europeans in ancient and medieval times.

## CHAPTER 8

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### CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS

Nothing is more indicative of a nation's refinement and qualification to lead the world than the extent of its members' humane tendencies, kindness and mercy towards all the classes of society. This attitude should be extended towards all those who live on the earth, humans and animals alike. This is the standard by which nations endure and the way their level of civility is measured.

In this field, our Ummah reached a pinnacle which no people had ever reached before and no subsequent nation has reached since. In the past, nations only knew of kindness and charity in a narrow sense that did not go beyond institutes and schools. In the modern age, even though Western nations have achieved a great deal in meeting societal needs through social foundations and public institutions, they have not attained the level of doing humane work solely for the sake of Allah (ﷻ). Our Ummah did exactly that during its time of strength and glory, and even during the period of weakness and decline. Seeking status, fame, reputation or remembrance after death are the greatest motives for Westerners to perform acts of charity, whereas the primary motive for our Ummah in doing good deeds is seeking the pleasure of



Allah, whether or not people know about their deeds. We find sufficient evidence of this in the fact that Ṣalāḥ ad-Deen al-Ayyoobi spent all his wealth on charitable works; he filled Syria and Egypt with charitable institutions such as mosques, schools, and hospices for the poor, without his name being recorded on any of them. Instead, he set them up in the name of his leaders, ministers, helpers and friends. This is the ultimate example of acts that are done without being influenced by whims and desires.

Also, the Westerners restrict the benefits of many of their social institutions to their own nations or provinces, whereas our social institutions opened their doors to all people, regardless of nationality, language, country or school of thought.

A third difference is that we established social institutions to do all kinds of social work that is unknown to Westerners to date. The kinds of work are remarkable and highlight the humane tendency of our Ummah, which is more pure, more comprehensive and more far-reaching than any humane tendency in other nations.

Before we discuss the many kinds of charitable work done by the social institutions in our civilization, we must outline the principles of our civilization in this field. These principles had an effect on the individuals of our Ummah and motivated them to set up these institutions in a manner that has been unknown in any other nation.

Islam encourages being charitable in a manner that removes the motives of greed from human souls; it does away with Satan's whispered attempts to dissuade them with warnings about poverty. After urging Muslims to spend in charity, the Qur'an says:

﴿الشَّيْطَانُ يَعِدُكُمُ الْفَقْرَ وَيَأْمُرُكُم بِالْفَحْشَاءِ وَاللَّهُ يَعِدُكُم مَّغْفِرَةً مِّنْهُ

(سورة البقرة : ٢٦٨)

وَفَضَّلًا وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٦٨﴾

«Satan threatens you with poverty and orders you to immorality, while Allah promises you forgiveness from Him and bounty. And Allah is All-Encompassing and Knowing.» (Qur'an 2: 268)

This call to do good actions applies to everyone who is able to do them, whether they are rich or poor. The rich may perform beneficial actions through wealth and status, and the poor may do the same with their hands, heart, tongue and behaviour. Every Muslim can be generous in the field of spreading goodness.

The poor once complained to the Prophet (ﷺ) that the rich were ahead of them in doing good because they were able to give charity from their wealth, while these poor people had nothing that they could give in charity. The Messenger (ﷺ) explained to them that doing good works did not just mean spending money; everything that benefited people was an act of goodness.

He said: «In every [saying] *Subhân Allâh* (Glory be to Allah), there is charity; enjoining what is good is charity; forbidding what is evil is charity; removing a harmful thing from the road is charity; reconciling between two people is charity; helping a man onto his mount or hoisting up his goods onto it is charity.» (Bukhari and Muslim)

Therefore, Islam has opened the doors of doing good to all people. All workers, traders, peasants, students, teachers, women, the disabled, the elderly, the blind and paralysed can perform beneficial actions; economic circumstances should not prevent anyone from playing their part in spreading goodness in society. Islam takes the humane tendencies of its followers to a new height when it says that all the slaves of Allah (ﷻ) should perform

amiable actions, regardless of their religions, languages, countries and nationalities.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said in this regard: «The most beloved to Allah are those who are the most beneficial to humankind.» (Ibn Hibbân; a reliable hadith according to al-Albâni)

Look how our civilization addresses the human soul! It does so in a manner that endears good to it by pointing out the benefits that one will gain through appropriate deeds. Islam tells each person that above all, doing good will benefit its doer by being rewarded, loved and praised by Allah (ﷻ).

﴿... وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ ...﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٧٢)

﴿...And whatever good you [believers] spend is for yourselves...﴾  
(*Qur'an* 2: 272)

﴿مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهِ ...﴾ (سورة فصلت: ٤٦)

﴿Whoever does righteousness — it is for his [own] soul...﴾  
(*Qur'an* 41: 46)

Humans are naturally selfish, putting themselves above all else, but the arrival of the Qur'an undoubtedly has had an effect on them. The miser has become generous, spending and distributing money generously among people.

«When Allah (ﷻ) revealed the words:

﴿مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ أَضْعَافًا كَثِيرَةً ...﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٤٥)

﴿Who is it that would loan Allah a goodly loan so He may multiply it for him many times over?...﴾  
(*Qur'an* 2: 245)

A Companion, Abu ad-Daḥdâḥ (رضي الله عنه), said: Is Allah really asking His slave for a loan, O Messenger of Allah?

He replied: Yes.

He said: Stretch forth your hand, O Messenger of Allah.

Abu ad-Daḥdâḥ (رضي الله عنه) asked him to bear witness that he was giving his only possession in charity: a garden in which there were seven hundred fruit-bearing palm trees. He went back to his wife, who lived with their children in that garden, and told her what he had done. She and the children left the garden, and she said to him: What a profitable sale you have made, O Abu ad-Daḥdâḥ!» (Recorded by aṭ-Ṭabarâni and authenticated by al-Haythami; however, al-Booṣayri said its chain of narrators is weak)

«When Allah (ﷻ) revealed the words:

﴿لَنْ نَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّى تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا نَحِبُونَ...﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ٩٢)

«Never will you attain the good [reward] until you spend [in the way of Allah] from that which you love...» (Qur'an 3: 92)

Abu Ṭalhaḥ al-Anṣârî (رضي الله عنه) said: O Messenger of Allah, the most beloved of my wealth to me is Bayraha', a well which contains clean water. [I give it] in charity for the sake of Allah, hoping that it will be kept with Him. O Messenger of Allah, you can do with it as Allah wills you.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: Well done! This is a profitable deal; this is a profitable deal. Retain the principal, and give the fruits in charity.» (Bukhari)

This act of charity was the first waqf in Islam. From here, the occurrence of waqf developed, supplying all social institutions with financial resources that helped them to fulfil their noble humane missions. The waqf was the foundation on which all the charitable institutions in our civilization's history were built. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was the first one to set the sublime example to his Ummah. He gave as a waqf seven gardens that one

of the warriors had bequeathed before his death. The warrior had said that the Messenger (ﷺ) should dispose of them in whatever manner he wished, so the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) set them up as a waqf for the poor and needy, the *mujâhideen* (those who fought in the cause of Allah), and anyone else who was in need. His example was followed by ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb (رضي الله عنه), who gave his land at Khaybar as a waqf, and by other Companions. Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه), ‘Uthmân (رضي الله عنه), ‘Ali (رضي الله عنه), az-Zubayr (رضي الله عنه), Mu‘adh (رضي الله عنه) and others also contributed to various religious endowments. In fact, almost every Companion contributed some of his wealth to a waqf. This humane action was revived during the caliphate of ‘Umar (رضي الله عنه), when he gave some land as a waqf for the sake of Allah (ﷻ). He called together a group of the *Muhâjireen* (the Muslims who migrated with the Prophet from Makkah to Madinah) and Anṣâr, asking them to bear witness to it.

Jâbir ibn ‘Abdullâh al-Anṣârî (رضي الله عنه) said: I do not know of any Companions of the Messenger of Allah who had the means, whether from among the Muhâjireen or the Anṣâr, who did not give some of their wealth as a waqf that was not to be bought, inherited or given away.

Muslims continued to do this, generation after generation, giving land, gardens, houses and crops as religious endowments for good works. This filled the Islamic society with so many charitable foundations that it is too difficult to list or count them all.

These foundations were of two types: those which were set up by the state and supported by large-scale religious endowments, and those which were set up by individuals, governors, leaders and rich individuals, male and female. We cannot list all the types of charitable foundations, but it will be sufficient to list the most important ones.

One of the first types of charitable institutions was the mosques. People used to compete in constructing mosques, seeking the pleasure of Allah (ﷻ). The kings even used to compete in the grandeur of the mosques that they founded. It is sufficient for us to note here the amount that al-Waleed ibn ‘Abdul Malik spent on building the Umayyad Mosque, which is almost unbelievable. This is because he spent a lot of money and used the services of many men.

Other types of charitable institutions included schools and hospitals, which we will discuss in separate chapters, inshallah.

Charitable institutions also included inns for travellers who were cut off from their homelands. They also catered to the poor and needy people. There were hermitages and prayer rooms where anyone could stay and devote himself or herself to worship. Also, there were houses where those who had no money to buy or rent one could stay. Moreover, there were fountains which provided free water to people on public thoroughfares. There were public ‘restaurants’ which distributed food such as bread, meat, soup and sweets.

Some of these institutions existed until very recently, such as the *takiyah* (a hospice or home for the disabled or needy) of Sultan Saleem, the *takiyah* of Shaykh Muḥiy ad-Deen in Damascus and the houses of the pilgrims in Makkah, where those who were visiting the house of Allah (ﷻ) could stay. There were so many of these houses that Makkah was filled with them; some of the jurists have even ruled that it is not allowed to rent out the houses of Makkah during the days of Hajj, because the entire city is a waqf for the benefit of the pilgrims.

Another charitable action is the digging of wells in the desert to provide water for flocks, crops and travellers. There were many

such wells between Baghdad and Makkah, between Damascus and Madinah, and even between the capitals of the Islamic states and their cities and villages. This was to ensure that the travellers would not face the danger of going thirsty.

These institutions included posts or guards on the borders to ward off the danger of enemy attacks. These were institutions set up specifically to guard the borders for the sake of Allah (ﷻ), where the mujâhideen could find sufficient weapons, ammunition, food and drink. This had a great effect in warding off the Roman attacks during the Abbasid period as well as the Westerners' attacks against Egypt and Syria during the Crusades. These were accompanied by religious endowments that provided horses, swords, arrows and other means of jihad to those who were fighting for the sake of Allah (ﷻ). This popularised the manufacture of war materials. Consequently, many centres of production were set up in our country. This was to such an extent that during the Crusades, Westerners would come to our countries during a truce to buy weapons from us. The scholars issued religious rulings stating that it was forbidden to sell weapons to our enemies. Look at the way things have changed now. We have become dependent upon the West for our weapons, and they only let us buy them based on conditions that rob us of our dignity and independence.

Some religious endowments were set up solely to provide an income to those who wanted to engage in jihad, as well as the soldiers of the Muslim army, especially when the state was unable to spend on each individual soldier. Thereby, the path of jihad was made easy for every fighter who wanted to risk his life for the sake of Allah (ﷻ), purchasing, therewith, paradise as vast as the heavens and the earth. Look how things have changed: we devote only a single week to collect donations to strengthen and equip the

army with weapons. If we had true social awareness and sincere faith, we could set up factories to provide our army with weapons and equipment every day, not just one week of the year. This would enable it to become one of the strongest armies, well-prepared to face the enemy and defend our homeland.

Social institutions also included those which were set up to repair roads, arches and bridges, as well as those which were set up for graveyards. A person would donate a large piece of land to be used as a public cemetery.

Some religious endowments were set up to purchase shrouds for poor people who had died, in order to prepare them for burial.

There were amazing charitable institutions that were set up for the purpose of 'social security'. There were institutions for foundlings and orphans, which arranged for their circumcision and care. There were institutions for the paralysed, the blind and the disabled. Generous provision was made for all their needs — accommodation, food, clothing and education.

There were institutions which were aimed at prison reform, raising the standard of prison conditions and providing prisoners with sufficient food to keep them in good health. There were also institutions which provided the blind and paralysed with assistants who could take them out and serve them.

There were foundations which arranged marriages for single young men and women when the men or their guardians did not have enough money. The foundations arranged to cover their expenses or at least take care of the bridal gift. How noble this action was, and how great our need is for such services nowadays.

There were institutions which provided mothers with milk and sugar water. These existed long before our modern 'Drop of Milk Society' and were purely for the sake of Allah (ﷻ). One of the



charitable acts of Ṣalâḥ ad-Deen was his setting up a tap of milk and another of sugar water at one of the gates of the Citadel, which remains to date in Damascus. He did this so that mothers could come twice a week and take whatever milk and sugar water they needed for their children.

One of the most interesting charitable foundations was the waqf that provided containers to children who had broken theirs on their way home. They could come to this foundation and take a new container in exchange for the broken one; then they would return to their families without fearing any backlash for breaking the container.

The final type of foundation that we will mention here comprised those that were set up to treat sick animals or to feed and take care of them after they became unable to work. An example is al-Marj al-Akhdar in Damascus, where the city's soccer stadium now stands. It was a waqf for horses and other animals that had grown old and were no longer able to work. They were cared for until they died.

These were thirty types of charitable foundations set up under the shade of our civilization. Can we find a similar example in any of the previous nations? Indeed, can we find an example of some of these in the modern civilization? This is a unique and enduring feature, which distinguished our civilization at a time when the entire world was immersed in negligence, ignorance, backwardness and oppression. It is a unique and enduring feature that alleviated human suffering and pain. What are we doing nowadays? Where are the hands that will wipe the tears of the orphan, tend the wounds of the injured, and consolidate our society in such a manner that all people will enjoy security, dignity and peace?

## CHAPTER 9

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### SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

In the previous chapter, we spoke about the great variety of charitable institutions in our civilization, which is a source of pride for us. It demonstrates the great effect of our humane tendency on the members of our Ummah.

We also promised to discuss schools and hospitals in a separate chapter. Schools were based on the many religious endowments set up by rich leaders, scholars, traders, kings and governors. There was a vast number of such religious endowments. It is sufficient to note that there was no city or village throughout the length and breadth of the Muslim world that did not have numerous schools with dozens of teaching staff.

The primary nucleus of the school in our civilization was the mosque. It was not only a place of worship but also a school in which Muslims learned how to read and write. They also learned the Qur'an, sciences of Sharia, Arabic language and other branches of knowledge. Next, the *kuttâb* schools were established next to the mosques; they focused on teaching reading, writing,

Qur'an, some Arabic language and mathematics. The kuttâbs were similar to modern elementary schools. There were so many of them that Ibn Hawqal counted three hundred in one city in Sicily. Sometimes a single kuttâb would have hundreds or thousands of students. It has been mentioned in *Târeekh Abil-Qâsim al-Balkhi* that he had a kuttâb in which three thousand students studied. It was such a big school that he had to ride a donkey in order to go around to all his students and check on them.

Afterwards, the *madrasahs* (religious schools) were established alongside the kuttâbs and mosques. Studies in the madrasahs were like secondary or higher education nowadays. Tuition was free and was available to all classes of society. Students were not required to pay any fee for their secondary or higher studies, as they are required to do nowadays. Furthermore, education was not restricted to just one group in society to the exclusion of others. Rather, the opportunity to learn was available to all people. The son of a poor man would sit next to the son of a rich man and the son of a trader next to the son of an artisan or farmer. There were two sections in the madrasahs: one for the boarders who were non-residents or whose fathers did not earn enough for them to live on, and another for day students who wanted to return to their family homes in the evening. The boarders' section was also free of charge and provided students with food and a place to sleep, study and pray. Each madrasah included a mosque, study halls, students' bedrooms, a library, kitchens and bathrooms. Some schools also included a place where students could exercise in the open air. We still have some examples of these schools that filled the Muslim world. In Damascus, al-Madrasat an-Nooriyyah, which was founded by the great hero, Noor ad-Deen ash-Shaheed, is still in existence. It is

located in the Tailors' Bazaar and provides a living example of how schools operated during the time of the Islamic civilization. The traveller, Ibn Jubayr, visited it towards the beginning of the seventh century AH and admired it. He wrote:

One of the most beautiful schools in the world is Madrasat Noor ad-Deen. It is a luxurious palace to which water comes from a great river. This water flows through rectangular channels until it reaches a large tank in the middle of the building. This is a scene of dazzling beauty.

As time passed, this school began to disintegrate and some of its space was confiscated, but the *iwan* (a recess-like sitting room with a raised floor, usually opening on the main room or courtyard through an arcade) remains to date. It consists of a lecture hall, a mosque, a room for the teachers to rest in (which is like the professors' room in a university college), a house for the head teacher to live in with his family, and accommodation for the students and servants of the school. The school's neighbours confiscated its dining hall, kitchen, pantries and storerooms. This is a living example of a school in ancient times. Similar examples are in the Sha'bâniyah, 'Uthmâniyah and Khusrâwiyah schools in Aleppo. Students still have rooms in which they live and halls where they study. The dining hall is no longer in use; instead, each student who belongs to the school is given a stipend at the end of each month.

The most prominent living example of these schools is the University of al-Azhar. It is a mosque in whose courtyards study circles are held. It is surrounded on all sides by rooms called *arwiqah* (sing. *riwâq*), where the students live, with each country having a section for its students. There is a *riwâq* for Syrians, another for North Africans, another for Turks, another for

Sudanese, and so on. The students of al-Azhar still receive a monthly stipend as well as free tuition. This is from the waqf funds which were set up for those seeking knowledge at al-Azhar.

In this context, it is worth mentioning the conditions and salaries of the teachers in these schools. The heads of the schools were among the best and most famous scholars. When we examine the history of famous scholars, we see the schools in which they taught. Imam an-Nawawi, Ibn Şalâh, Abu Shamah, Taqiy ad-Deen as-Subki, 'Imâd ad-Deen ibn Katheer and others taught in the college of *Hadith* (the collected statements and actions of the Prophet Muhammad that with the Qur'an form the basis of Islamic law) in Damascus. Al-Ghazzâlî, ash-Shirâzi, Imam al-Haramayn, ash-Shâsi, al-Khaṭṭeb at-Tabrayzi, al-Qazwayni, al-Fayroozabâdi and others taught in al-Madrasat an-Nizâmiyah in Baghdad, for example. During the early period of Islam, teachers did not receive wages for their work, but as time went on, the civilization became widespread and schools were built with religious endowments established to support them. Then teachers were given a monthly salary. It is interesting to note what the scholars of Transoxania did when Nizâm al-Mulk built a school that was famous throughout the region and gave the teachers a salary. The scholars unanimously denounced this action and organised a 'funeral for knowledge,' signifying the departure of knowledge and its blessings. They said that people with higher ambitions, drive and pure souls had been striving for the sake of knowledge. They were those who sought knowledge because of its noble status and their own pursuit of perfection. If salaries were paid for knowledge, it would attract the ignoble and lazy. This, in turn, would cause humiliation and weakening of knowledge. Nevertheless, this point of view did not endure as life and the necessities of civilization developed. Teachers were given salaries

of greater or lesser value, which varied according to the location, the school and the religious endowments that existed. Regardless of the case, salaries were sufficient for teachers and enabled them to live in ease and comfort. This was in addition to other salaries that might be given to teachers to meet their needs and living expenses. Shaykh Najm ad-Deen al-Khabooshâni was one of those appointed by Sultan Şalâh ad-Deen to teach in his school, Madrasat aş-Şalâhiyah. He gave him a monthly salary of forty dinars in return for teaching, ten dinars for supervising the religious endowments of the school, and sixty Egyptian *ratls*<sup>32</sup> of bread and two measures of Nile water each day. The salary of the Shaykh of al-Azhar included an amount to be spent on his mule. The amount he received from the waqf funds for his mule was one hundred Egyptian pounds per month. In later years, it was added to his own monthly salary.

No one was allowed to teach, except those whom the shaykhs testified were qualified to do so. In the early days of Islam, the shaykh would give his pupil permission to leave his [learning] circle and start his own circle. Sometimes he would appoint him to lead his circle after he died. If a student differed from this practice, he would be subject to criticism and extremely embarrassing questions.

In the biography of Abu Yoosuf, the head judge during the time of Hâroon ar-Rasheed, it is said that he fell sick while his shaykh, Abu Haneefah, was still alive. His shaykh visited him and said to him: "I was hoping that you would take my position after I die." After Abu Yoosuf recovered from his illness, he felt proud of himself and over-confident after hearing his shaykh's statement

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<sup>32</sup> Egyptian ratl = 449.28 grams

concerning him, so he set up his own circle, separate from his shaykh, Abu Ḥaneefah. Abu Ḥaneefah sent someone to him to ask him five tricky questions, the answers to which required a great deal of explanation and precise detail. Abu Yoosuf made mistakes in his answers and realised his error in leaving his shaykh. He went back to the shaykh's circle, and Abu Ḥaneefah said to him: "You wanted to run before you could walk [*lit.* you wanted to be a raisin before you were an unripe grape]. Whoever thinks that he can do without learning, let him weep for himself." This is how things were in the beginning. When schools became widespread, those who graduated from them would be given academic licenses issued by the shaykh of the school, similar to the degrees issued nowadays. Doctors would not be permitted to practise medicine until after they had obtained such a license from the senior doctors of the school.

Teachers had a special symbol which distinguished them from other professionals. During the time of Abu Yoosuf, their symbol was a black turban and a shawl-like garment worn over the head and shoulders. At the time of the Fâtimids,<sup>33</sup> their symbol was a green turban and a golden suit composed of six pieces, the most important of which were the cap and shawl-like garment. The tradition of the cloak being worn only by scholars and teachers began during the time of the Umayyads. The clothing worn by

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<sup>33</sup> The Fâtimid Caliphate was established in 297 AH/910 CE by Ubaydullâh al-Mahdi, whose real name was Said Ibn al-Husain Ibn Maimun al-Qadda'h, originally from the Majoosi religion, who falsely claimed he was a descendant of Fâtimah (عليها السلام), the Prophet's daughter. The scholars of Islam have agreed that the Fâtimid dynasty, which belongs to the Shiite Isma'eeli sect, did not descend from the Prophet's family. The Fâtimids sought to abolish the law, allowed alcohol consumption and immoral sexual behaviour, killed the scholars and righteous people, and committed mischief, murder and many other crimes.

academics in Andalusia was somewhat different from that worn by scholars and teachers in the East. The most important distinction was the small turban worn by the Andalusians; in some instances, scholars did not wear a turban at all. When Abu 'Ali al-Qâli, the famous linguist from the East, arrived in Andalusia and was met by the scholars there, people were astonished to see him wearing a large turban on his head. Some children and foolish people threw stones at him, mocking and denouncing him. Westerners adopted the dress worn in the schools in Andalusia; it was the origin of the academic dress that is known nowadays in the universities of Europe.

Teachers had their own guild, like the guilds of the Talibiyyeen [descendants of 'Ali ibn Abi Tâlib (ﷺ)], the Shareefs [descendants of the Prophet (ﷺ)] and other guilds to which some professionals and artisans belonged at that time. The teachers themselves elected the head of the guild, and the sultan did not get involved unless there was some dispute among the members. In that case, he would bring about reconciliation between them.

Abu Shamah narrated in *ar-Rawdatayn* that Muqallid ad-Dawla'i said: When al-Ḥâfidh al-Muradi died, our group of Arab and Kurdish jurists was split into two factions. Some of us favoured following the madh-hab, and wanted to appoint Shaykh Sharf ad-Deen ibn Abi 'Asroon as the head of our guild. Others inclined towards philosophy and debate, and wanted to appoint al-Qutb an-Nisapoori. There was discord among the jurists because of it. Noor ad-Deen heard about this, so he called a group of jurists together. Then he sent Majd ad-Deen ibn ad-Dâyah as his deputy, to tell them: We only wanted to build schools in order to spread knowledge and fight undesired innovations in religion, and what has happened amongst you is not good and is not appropriate. Our



master (meaning Noor ad-Deen) says: We approve of both factions, so we appoint both shaykhs. As a result, they were both appointed, with Sharf ad-Deen being in charge of the school that bears his name, and Qutb ad-Deen being in charge of Madrasat an-Nafari.

This is how the schools were, especially the institutes of higher education. The cities of the Muslim world, from one end to the other, were filled with schools. History mentions, with pride, many Muslim governors who played a major role in building schools in various regions. One of them was Şalâh ad-Deen al-Ayyoobi, who built schools in all the cities that came under his rule, in Egypt, Damascus, Mosul and Jerusalem. Another such ruler was Noor ad-Deen ash-Shaheed, who, in Syria alone, built fifteen institutes; six were in Damascus, four in Aleppo, two in Hamah, two in Homs and one in Baalbek. Another was Nizâm al-Mulk, the great Seljuk vizier, who filled Iraq and Khurasân with schools until it was said that he had a school in every city of Iraq and Khurasân. He used to build schools even in remote places; he built a large and beautiful school on the island of Ibn 'Amr. Every time he found a scholar who was distinguished by his deep knowledge, he would build a school for him, set up a waqf to support it and establish a library for it. The Nizâmiyah in Baghdad was the first and most important of the Nizâmi schools, in which the most famous Muslim scholars taught from the fifth to the ninth centuries AH. The number of students in this school reached six thousand, including the sons of the most prominent figures in the kingdom and the sons of the poorest artisans, all studying for free. In addition to this, the poor students would be given extra help from the funds set up for that purpose.

In addition to these great men, other leaders, wealthy individuals and traders would compete in building schools and setting up religious endowments to support them, ensuring that they would survive and that students would come to them. There were many who turned their own houses into schools, converting their possessions, including books and other property, into religious endowments to support the students who came to study there. Consequently, the number of schools grew to huge proportions, especially in the East.

The Andalusian traveller Ibn Jubayr was astonished when he saw the large number of schools in the East and the sizeable income they derived from their religious endowments. He called on the people in *Maghreb* (North Africa and Islamic Spain) to travel to the East to seek knowledge. He said:

There are many religious endowments to support students in the lands of the east, especially Damascus. Anyone among the people of the Maghreb who desires success should travel to these lands, where they will find many opportunities that will help them gain knowledge, foremost among which is not having to worry about earning a living.

The testimony of Ibn al-Jubayr is valuable because he was a traveller who was known to be honest and truthful. Ibn Jubayr singled out Damascus because of its large number of schools and religious endowments, which remained in place for a long time during our history. The schools of Damascus, where students came from all directions, numbered more than four hundred. They were so numerous that if a foreign student came to Damascus, he could theoretically stay for one year without spending more than one night in each school.

Ibn 'Asâkir has mentioned in his *Târeekh* (History) a poem written by Sultan ibn 'Ali ibn Munqid al-Kattâni, which describes Damascus and its virtues, including its schools.

The following are examples of the large numbers of religious endowments which were set up to benefit the schools. Religious endowments were set up to support al-Madrasat an-Nooriyah al-Kubra in Damascus, as is inscribed on the door of the school. These religious endowments were as follows: all the new bath-houses in the Wheat Market; two new bath-houses in al-Warraqaḥ outside Bâb as-Salâmah and the neighbouring house; the garden of al-Wazeer; three-quarters of the garden of al-Jawzah in al-Arzah; eleven stores outside Bâb al-Jâbiyah and the courtyard attached to them on the eastern side, along with nine fields in Dariyyah.

The religious endowments which were set up for the Noori hospital in Aleppo were as follows: the village of Ma'arata; half of the farm of Wâdi al-'Asl near Jabal Sam'ân; five acres of the farm of Kafartaba; one-third of the farm of al-Khâlidi; the mill in al-Matakh; one-eighth of the mill outside Bâb al-Jinân; eight acres of the farm of Abu Maraya in Gharâz (or the name may be I'zâz); five acres of the farm of al-Humayrah in al-Matakh; twelve acres of the farm of al-Farzal in al-Ma'arraḥ; one-third of the village of Bayt Râ'eel in al-'Azbayât; ten shops in Souq al-Hawâ'; lands outside Bâb Antâkiya, Bâb al-Faraj and Bâb al-Jinân.

We find sufficient evidence of the large number of religious endowments for the schools and mosques of Damascus — in particular, the fact that Imâm an-Noori (d. 676 AH) never ate from the fruits of Damascus in his life because most of the the fertile oasis on the south side of Damascus and its gardens were religious endowments that had been confiscated by evildoers.

There were schools for various purposes. Some were schools for teaching the Qur'an, the explanation of its meanings, and its memorisation and recitation. There were schools especially for the study of Hadith. There were schools for teaching fiqh, which were in the majority, with each madh-hab having its own schools. There were schools of medicine, and there were schools for the orphans. An-Nu'aymi, one of the scholars of the tenth century AH, has detailed the names and religious endowments of the schools of Damascus in his book *ad-Dâris fi Târeekh al-Malarias*. We learn that in Damascus alone there were seven Qur'an schools, sixteen Hadith schools, three schools teaching Qur'an and Hadith together, sixty-three schools teaching Shâfi'i fiqh, fifty-two schools teaching Ḥanafî fiqh, four schools teaching Mâlikî fiqh, and eleven schools teaching Ḥanbalî fiqh. This is in addition to the schools of medicine, hospices, inns, religious schools and mosques, all of which were also schools in which people learned. Keep in mind that during the same period, Westerners were in a state of absolute ignorance and widespread illiteracy. Knowledge had no refuge except in the monasteries, where it was restricted to men of the priesthood only. We realise the great things that our civilization achieved at the peak of its glory and the amazing progress our civilization achieved in the field of social foundations and academic institutions. Islam had a great role in spreading knowledge, raising the level of education and making its means available to all people.

Ibn Katheer said in *al-Bidâyah wan-Nihâyah*, concerning the events of 631 AH:

In this year, construction of Madrasat al-Mustansariyah in Baghdad was completed, a school the like of which had never been built before. It was devoted to study of the four schools of

fiqh, with sixty-two jurists, four teaching assistants and one teacher for each madh-hab, a shaykh of Hadith, two Qur'an reciters and ten listeners, a shaykh of medicine, ten Muslims who were working in medicine, and a library for orphans. Enough bread, meat, sweets and money was allocated to ensure that each person had ample provision. Religious endowments were established for libraries whose size, beauty and number of the books were unprecedented.

## CHAPTER 10

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# HOSPITALS AND MEDICAL INSTITUTIONS

One of the principles on which our civilization is based is striking a balance between the needs of the body and the needs of the soul. Our civilization believes that taking care of the body and its needs is essential for any human being to achieve happiness and spiritual enlightenment. Among the words which formed the basis of this civilization are the Prophet's saying: «Your body has rights over you.» (Bukhari and Muslim)

It may be noted that the acts of worship in Islam achieve one of the most important aims of medical science, which is the preservation of good health.<sup>34</sup> Prayer, fasting, Hajj and the essential parts and pillars of these acts of worship all protect physical good health, energise the body and restore its strength. If we add to that the fact that Islam seeks to resist disease and prevent its spread, along with encouraging us to seek appropriate

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<sup>34</sup> 'Ali ibn 'Abbās defined medicine as the science that seeks to preserve good health and to restore it to the sick.

treatment, we will realise the strong foundation our civilization has built in the field of medicine. The world has benefited from our civilization in the establishment of hospitals and medical institutions. It has produced doctors whose contributions to science in general, and to medicine in particular, are still benefiting humanity.

The Arabs knew about the medical school in Jundishapoor that was established by Chosroes in the mid-sixth century CE, from which some of their doctors graduated, one of whom was al-Hârith ibn Kaldah. He lived during the time of the Prophet (ﷺ); in fact, the Prophet (ﷺ) used to tell his Companions to go to him for treatment when they fell sick. During the time of al-Waleed ibn ‘Abdul Malik, the first hospital in Islam was built, devoted especially to the care of lepers. He appointed doctors to care for them and gave the doctors salaries. He issued orders that the lepers be quarantined and not allowed to go out. He also gave stipends to the lepers and to the blind. After this, hospitals were established one after another and were known by the name *baymâristân* or *dâr al-marḍâ*.

Hospitals were of two types: mobile field hospitals and stationary hospitals. Field hospitals were first introduced in Islam during the time of the Prophet (ﷺ). This was during the Battle of the Trench, when a tent was set up for the wounded.

When Sa‘d ibn Mu‘âdh (رضي الله عنه) was struck in the medial arm vein [the vein used for taking blood], the Prophet (ﷺ) said [according to Ibn Katheer]: Put him in the tent of Rufaydah so that he will be close to me and I can visit him.

This was the first military field hospital in Islam. After that, such hospitals became widespread during the times of the caliphs and kings. They soon became equipped with everything the

patient needed including medicines, food, drink, clothes, doctors and pharmacists. The hospital would move from village to village in regions where there were no permanent hospitals. The vizier 'Ali ibn 'Eesâ al-Jarrah wrote to Sinân ibn Thâbit, who was in charge of the hospitals in Baghdad and elsewhere, saying:

I thought about those who are in the villages, for there is no village in which there are not sick people who have no doctors to take care of them, because there are no doctors in the villages. So send some doctors and a store of medicines and potions, to go around among the villages and stay in each area for as long as they are needed to treat the people there, then move on to another village.

Some of the field hospitals, during the time of the Seljuk sultan Mahmood, were so huge that they needed forty camels to transport them.

Regarding permanent hospitals, there were many of them in the cities and capitals. Even small towns in the Muslim world during that time had one or more hospitals each. In Cordoba alone, there were fifty hospitals.

Hospitals were of various kinds. There were hospitals for the army, run by specialist doctors, separate from the doctors of the caliphs, leaders and governors. There were hospitals for prisoners, in which the doctors would go around every day and treat sick prisoners with the necessary medicines. One of the things that the vizier 'Ali ibn 'Eesâ al-Jarrâh wrote to Sinân ibn Thâbit, the head doctor of Baghdad, was:

I thought about the matter of those who are in jail; because their numbers are so large and the places in which they stay are so rough, many of them get sick. We should appoint doctors



for them, to visit them every day and take them medicines and potions; these doctors should go around to all the prisons, treating the sick people there.

There were emergency stations set up near the mosques and public places. Al-Maqreezi tells us that when Ibn Tuloon built his famous mosque in Egypt, he built a place for ablution in the rear, along with a pharmacy which contained all kinds of medicines and potions. Servants looked after it, and a doctor would be present on Fridays to treat sick worshippers.

There were public hospitals, which opened their doors to treat the masses. They were divided into two separate sections: one for males and the other for females. Each section had numerous wards, each ward for a certain kind of disease. Accordingly, there were wards for internal diseases, for the eyes, for wounds, for broken limbs and orthopaedics, and for mental disease. The internal diseases' ward was further divided into rooms, with a room for fever, a room for diarrhoea and so on. Each section had doctors, with a doctor in charge, so there would be a head of internal diseases, a head of surgeons and orthopaedics, a head of eye doctors, and so forth. Each section had a general supervisor called *Sa'oor*, which was a title given to the head doctor in the hospital. Doctors used to work in shifts, with each doctor having an allocated time when he was obliged to stay in his ward and treat the sick. Each hospital also had a number of cleaners, both men and women, as well as nurses and assistants, all of whom were given generous salaries. In each hospital, there was a pharmacy called 'the store of potions', where all kinds of potions, treatments, exotic jams, different kinds of medicine and top-quality perfumes, not found anywhere else, were kept. There were also surgical instruments as well as glass and china vessels and so

forth, the likes of which could only be found in the storerooms of kings.

The hospitals were also educational institutions. In every hospital, there was a large hall for lectures where senior doctors would sit with other doctors and students with instruments and books beside them. Students would sit in front of their teacher after he had finished checking on the patients and treating them, and the teacher and students would discuss medical matters and read from medical books. Often, the teacher would request his students to accompany him to the hospital to receive practical lessons on treating the sick, as happens nowadays in hospitals that are attached to medical colleges. Ibn Abu Usaybi'ah, who studied medicine in the Noori hospital in Damascus, said:

I used to go around with the doctor Muhadhab ad-Deen and the doctor 'Imrân when they treated the sick who were staying in the hospital. Then when we finished, I would sit with Shaykh Radiy ad-Deen ar-Rahbi to learn how to diagnose diseases. I discussed a lot of diseases and their treatment with him.

A doctor was not allowed to set up a practice of his own until he had taken an exam before the senior scholars of the state, where he would present a thesis in the field in which he wanted a license to practice. This would either be a thesis that he had written himself or a commentary he had written on a book by one of the senior medical scholars. He would be examined and questioned about everything that had to do with this field. If he answered well, the senior doctor would issue him a license, which would permit him to practice the profession of medicine. In 319 AH/ 931 CE, during the reign of the caliph al-Muqadir, it was agreed that some doctors had made a mistake in their treatment of a man who had subsequently died. The caliph issued orders that all the

doctors in Baghdad be examined again. They were tested by Sinân ibn Thâbit, the senior doctor of Baghdad. The number of doctors in Baghdad alone was eight hundred and sixty-odd; this does not include the number of famous doctors who were not examined, or the doctors of the caliph, viziers and governors.

We should not neglect to mention that attached to every hospital was a library filled with books on medicine and other sciences, which doctors and their students might need. It was said that in the hospital of Ibn Tuloon in Cairo, there was a library which contained more than one hundred thousand volumes on all branches of science.

Admittance to the hospital was free for everyone. There was no distinction between the rich and poor, stranger or local resident, clever or dull-witted. The ill would first be examined in the outer ward. If a person was only mildly sick, a prescription would be written, and the patient would go to the hospital pharmacy to have the prescription filled. For those whose condition warranted admission to the hospital, their names would be written down and they would enter the bathroom and take off their clothes, which would be put in a special store. They would be given special hospital clothes and would enter the ward that was devoted to people with the kind of illness that they were suffering from. They would be given their own bed, with fine linens and covers, and would receive the treatment that the doctor specified for them. They would also be given food, in specified amounts that would restore them to good health. The food given to the sick included lamb, beef, poultry and chicken. The sign of recovery was that the patient would eat a whole loaf of bread and a whole chicken in one sitting. When the patients reached the final stage of recovery, they would be admitted to the recovery ward. Once fully recovered,

they would be given a new set of clothes and an amount of money that would be sufficient for them until they were able to start working again. The rooms of the hospital were clean, with running water. Its wards were fitted with the finest furnishings. Every hospital had inspectors who would check on cleanliness, along with accountants to take care of its financial affairs. Often the caliph or governor himself would check on the sick and supervise their good treatment.

This was the system that prevailed in all the hospitals that were established in the Muslim world, whether in the west or in the east, in the hospitals of Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, Jerusalem, Makkah, Madinah, the Maghreb and Andalusia. We will limit ourselves to describing four hospitals in four cities that were capitals of Islam during those times.

1 — **The ‘Adâdi Hospital in Baghdad.** This was built by ‘Adâd ad-Dawlah ibn Bawayh in 371 AH. Ar-Râzi, the famous doctor, chose its location by placing four pieces of meat in four places in Baghdad during night. In the morning, he looked for the piece that smelled the best. This determined the place where the hospital was subsequently constructed. The hospital was built, and a huge amount of money was spent on it. Twenty-four doctors were appointed to work in the hospital. It was supplied with all it needed: a scientific library, pharmacy, kitchens and stores. In 449 AH, the caliph al-Qa’im ibn ‘Amr-Allah renovated this hospital and gathered rare tonics, medicines and drugs. He provided beds and covers for the patients, medicinal perfumes, employees, doctors and cleaners; the hospital had gatekeepers and guards as well as bathrooms. Next to it was a garden containing all kinds of fruits and vegetables; there were boats on its lake to transport the weak and the poor. The doctors worked in shifts, morning and evening. Some of them would stay for the night shifts.

**2 — The Noori Hospital in Damascus.** This was built by the just ruler and king Noor ad-Deen ash-Shaheed in 549 AH/ 1154 CE, using money that he had taken as ransom for one of the Frankish kings. When he built it, it was one of the most beautiful hospitals that had ever been built in the entire land. He stipulated that it was for the poor and needy. However, if the rich needed any of the medicines that were in it, he would let them have them. All the potions and medicines were freely available to anyone who wanted them. The traveller Ibn Jubayr entered this hospital in 580 AH, and he described how the doctors took care of the sick, examining them and preparing the medicines and foods that they needed. There was a section that was especially for mental sickness, where the insane were tied with chains whilst they were treated and fed.

One of the historians has mentioned that in 831 AH, a non-Arab man of good manners and refined taste visited Damascus. When he entered the Noori Hospital, he saw many doctors, the way they cared for the sick, and the innumerable good foods and nice things that were in the hospital. He thought of testing the knowledge of the doctors. He pretended to be sick and stayed for three days. The head doctor came and checked on him frequently. When he checked his pulse, he realised that he was not sick at all and just wanted to test the doctors. He prescribed for him good food, fat chickens, sweets, potions and all kinds of fruits. After three days, he wrote him a message in which he said: “For us, hospitality lasts for three days...” From this, the foreigner realised that they had figured out what he was doing and they had been extending him hospitality in the hospital all that time.

This hospital continued its great work until 1317 AH, when the al-Ghuraba’ Hospital was founded. This is the hospital which is

currently supervised by the Medical College of the Syrian University. The Noori Hospital was closed down, and the building was used as a private school.

3 — **The Mansoori Hospital in Cairo**, which is also known as the Qalâwoon Hospital. This was a house belonging to some governor, which the king al-Manşoor Sayf ad-Deen Qalâwoon turned into a public hospital in 683 AH/ 1284 CE. A waqf was set up to provide it with one thousand *dirhams* (silver coins) each year. Attached to it was a mosque, a school and a library for orphans. They said that the reason it was built was that the king al-Manşoor Qalâwoon, when he was leading the campaign against the Romans during the days of adh-Dhâhir Baybars in 1275 CE, fell sick in Damascus. After doctors treated him with medicine taken from the great Noori hospital and he recovered, he went to see the hospital for himself and was very impressed by it. He vowed to Allah (ﷻ) that if he became a king, he would build a hospital like this. Thus, when he became the sultan, he bought this house and turned it into a hospital. Its system and organisation was one of the miraculous wonders of the world. He allowed all people to enter it and benefit from it, male and female, independent persons and slaves, kings and subjects.

When sick people recovered and left the hospital, they were given new clothes. Whoever died there would be prepared, shrouded and buried. The doctors were appointed to work in various fields of medicine. Cleaners and servants were employed to serve the patients, make the place nice and clean for them, wash their clothes and help them to bathe. Each patient had two people to serve him; each patient was given a bed with a full set of bedding. Each group of patients was given their own space, in which there was a place for the head doctor to sit and give lessons in medicine to his students.

One of the most marvellous things about this hospital was that its benefits were not limited to the sick who were admitted there; even those who were staying at home could ask for whatever potions, foods and medicine they needed. The humanitarian work of this hospital was so great that one of the eye doctors who worked there said that he used to treat four thousand people daily, including patients who had been admitted, those who were recovering and those who were being discharged. All those who recovered from their sickness left the hospital with a new set of clothes and a stipend for their needs so that they would not be forced to do any hard work straight after leaving the hospital.

Another wonder of this hospital is that it was stated in the waqf contract that food was to be given to each patient on his own plate, which was not to be used by any other patient. It was to be covered and brought to the patient.

This reminds me of the things I used to read about the city of Tripoli, where an unusual waqf was set up to employ two people to walk through the hospitals every day and speak quietly to one another within the patients' hearing, remarking on their improvement and good colour, and so forth.

We think it is useful to quote the texts of the waqf set up for this great hospital, as mentioned by the author of *Târeekh al-Bimâristânât fil-Islâm*:

The best reward you get is by undertaking serious and difficult tasks which can produce a lot of rewards. This is what every negligent person should make the most of. The best that anyone can aim for is that which brings a lot of benefits and a lot of pleasure, that benefits the first generation and continues to grow in strength as the years go by. That is a waqf whose benefits reach everyone and whose reward is everlasting; its

benefits are great and it brings the reward of paradise, and brings a person closer to the pleasure of the Most Merciful. This charity is the dowry of the beautiful women promised to male believers in paradise, and this spending brings a great treasure of reward. It is no secret that it brings a great deal of joy to the sick and poor, and it brings happiness to broken hearts. It makes them of independent means by giving them refuge and treatment, the reward for which cannot be expressed. Glad tidings to those who have made a deal with their Lord, the Almighty, the Most Forgiving, the One Who is always watching them and knows their innermost secrets and thoughts, for they have given Him a goodly loan, according to their means and abilities. By attaining this reward, they are victors, for they have helped poor Muslims by alleviating their pain and treating their illness, and their help will save them tomorrow from the punishment of their Lord, the Creator. The hope is that it will give them a great status before Allah and will bring them close to Him so that they will not fear any injustice or any curtailment (of their reward) [See Qur'an 20: 112], and that it will give them good deeds that will leave them with no distress of sin. When our master, the king and sultan al-Manşoor, the knowledgeable and just, came to know of this, he issued his noble command that the waqf of the Manşoori hospital should be set up. [Here the waqf contract gives the description and location of the hospital and lists its other resources]. It has been set up to treat sick Muslims, men and woman, rich and poor, in Cairo and its outskirts, those who live there and those who come from the various regions and provinces of Egypt, of all different types, with all kinds of sickness and afflictions, whether they are major or minor, similar or different, or diseases of the faculties, whether



obvious or hidden, or disturbances of the mental faculties, the preservation of which is one of the most important things that man needs, by means of medicines and drugs that are known to the medical experts. People enter the hospital in flocks or individually, old and young, adults and children, women and infants. The sick among the poor, men and women alike, stay there to receive treatment, until they recover. They are given the things that are prepared for their medical treatment, which is distributed to those who come from near and far, to local people and strangers, to the strong and the weak, low class and high class, important figures and insignificant people, rich and poor, subjects and rulers, blind and seeing, inferior and superior, famous and unknown, noble and ignoble, those who live a life of luxury and those who have little, master and slave, with no condition of payment and no objection if there is no payment. Rather, it is all done purely for the sake of Allah and in the hope of receiving His reward and bounty, by spending on those who take care of the sick, be they doctors, eye doctors, surgeons, those who make medicinal potions and foods, those who manufacture ointments, eye-drops, medicines and laxatives, both simple and compound, and on those who take care of the place, cleaners, storekeepers, secretaries, workers and others who usually do these jobs; and on whatever is needed to treat the sick of food, drink, eye-drops, suppositories, ointments, creams, potions, simple and compound medicines, furniture, pots and instruments that are prepared for the benefit of the sick.

The one who is in charge of the income generated by this waqf buys, every day, whatever is needed by the sick of herbs, clay vessels for their food, glass cups and vessels for their potions, oil for cooking, water from the blessed Nile for their drink and

food, and so on, to cover their food when it is taken to them. Money is also to be spent on fans for them to use when it is hot. The one who is in charge of this waqf is to spend on these things from the income generated by the waqf, without being either extravagant or stingy, and without spending more than is necessary. All of that is to be done according to what is needed, so as to earn more reward. The one who is in charge of this waqf should hire two Muslim men who are known to be religiously committed and trustworthy. One of them is to be in charge of the store of items to be given out to patients, so he will be in charge of distributing the potions, eye-drops, herbal remedies, ointments and creams, taking permission from the doctors to distribute these things. The other will be given the glass bottles of potions that are prescribed for the sick and the mentally ill, men and women, who are staying in the hospital, and he will distribute them every day and every night, giving each patient whatever has been prescribed. Food is to be cooked in the hospital, chicken, meat and other things. The food that has been cooked for each patient will be placed on a tray for their exclusive use, not shared with any other patient, covered and brought to the patient, until all the patients have been fed and each of them has been given whatever has been prescribed for them, morning and evening.

The one who is in charge of the income generated by this waqf spends on those whom he appoints to work in this hospital of Muslim doctors, eye doctors and surgeons, according to the amount of time they work and the needs of the sick. He is the one who decides about the equipment and about their pay, so long as he is neither stingy nor extravagant with regard to that. The doctors deal with the sick and mentally ill, both men and women, who are in the hospital. The doctors work all together

or take shifts as agreed among themselves, or by permission of the one who is in charge. They ask the patients how they are and what is new with them, whether they are getting better or getting worse. They prescribe whatever each patient needs of food, drink, and so forth, on a piece of paper so that the patient may have the prescription made up. They are obliged to stay in the hospital overnight, either all together or in shifts. The eye doctors stay there every morning to treat the eyes of those in the hospital who are suffering ophthalmic diseases, and they treat any Muslim who comes to them, so that no Muslim who is suffering an eye disease will be turned away. They are very gentle in their treatment of those who are suffering eye diseases. If there are any patients who have pus in their eyes or any condition that requires a consultation with a general physician, he refers them and goes with them. He treats them in consultation with the other doctor and does not try to treat them on his own, and he checks on their condition while they are recovering.

The one who is in charge of this waqf spends on the one whom he appoints as a shaykh to research all aspects of medical science. This shaykh sits in a specific large room as designated in the waqf contract, to study the various specialties of medicine at the times specified by the person in charge of the waqf as he sees fit, so that the number of doctors in the hospital will not be too great. The one who is in charge of the income of this waqf employs cleaners, both men and women, to work in the hospital, paying each as he sees fit, according to their work, which is to serve the sick and the mentally ill, both men and women, in this hospital, washing their clothes, cleaning their rooms, and taking care of their affairs in an appropriate manner.

The one who is in charge of this waqf spends whatever is needed to shroud those among the sick and mentally ill, men and women, who die in the hospital. He spends what is needed to wash them, to buy the shroud and perfumes used when washing the deceased, and to pay those who wash them, dig their graves and bury them in their graves according to the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ) and in an appropriate manner. If a person is sick in his or her own house and is poor, the one who is in charge of this waqf may spend on whatever he or she needs of potions, medicines, ointments, and the like, from the income of this hospital, without that detracting from what is to be spent on those who are staying in the hospital. For the persons who die while among their families, the one who is in charge of the waqf spends on what is needed to prepare them, wash them, shroud them, carry them to the graveyard and bury them in the grave in an appropriate manner.

For any patients who are staying in the blessed hospital who recover and are cured, the one who is in charge of the income of this waqf buys them a set of ordinary clothes, without any extravagance that would detract from the interests of the sick and those who are staying in the hospital. All of that is done as the person in charge sees fit, according to what he believes is necessary. The one who is in charge of this waqf must remember to fear Allah in private and in public. He should not give precedence to a person of status over one who is weak, or to one who is strong over one who is weaker, or to a local person over a stranger. He should give precedence in his spending to that which will bring more reward and bring him closer to the Lord of lords.

4 — **The Hospital of Marrakesh.** This was founded by Ameer al-Mu'mineen al-Manşoor Abu Yoosuf, one of the Almohad kings of Morocco. He chose a large area in Marrakesh as the best location for the hospital and issued commands for it to be built in the best possible manner. He ordered that all kinds of trees, herbs and edible plants be planted therein. He also commanded that water channels be installed that flowed through all the buildings as well as through the four pools, one of which was made of white marble. Then he ordered that it be fitted with the finest furnishings, using various kinds of wool, linen, silk, leather and other materials that defy description. He set up a pharmacy to make potions, lotions and eye medicines. He had clothes prepared for the sick — different clothes for night and day, with different types for summer and winter. When the patients recovered, they were given a stipend to live on when they were discharged, especially if they were poor, until they could start working again. If the patients were rich, they would be given their own money. The hospital was not only for the poor to the exclusion of the rich; any strangers who fell sick in Marrakesh would be taken there and treated until they recovered or died. Every Friday, the caliph would come to the hospital and visit the sick; he would ask them how they were and how the doctors and nurses were treating them.

These are just four examples out of hundreds of hospitals that were widespread throughout the eastern and the western regions of the Muslim world during the time that Europe was wandering in the darkness of ignorance. They knew nothing of these hospitals, their precise organisation and the sublime manifestation of the humane spirit therein. We will quote what the German Orientalist, Max Meyerhof, said about the state of European hospitals during the time when the hospitals in our civilization were functioning as described above. Dr. Max said:

The Arab hospitals and the health system in the ancient Islamic world teach us a hard and bitter lesson which we cannot appreciate fully, unless we compare them with European hospitals of the same period.

It was only three centuries ago that public hospitals in any real sense came into existence in Europe. We would not be exaggerating if we said that even as late as the eighteenth century (1710 CE), the sick were still being treated in their own homes or in special houses. Before that, in Europe, the word 'hospital' was used simply to describe 'a house of kindness', a refuge for those who had nowhere else to go, whether they were sick or handicapped. The best example of this was the hospital called Hotel Dieu in Paris, the greatest hospital in Europe at that time. Both Max Tourdeau and Tenon described it as follows:

The hospital contains 1200 beds, 486 of which are each for one person. As for the rest, none of which is wider than five feet, you will usually find between three and six patients in each one. The corridors are filled with mould and damp, there is no ventilation and they are always dark. You can see around eight hundred sick people lying on the floor, piled on top of one another, on the bare ground or on piles of straw, in pitiful conditions all the time... In a medium-sized bed you will find four or five or six patients, one next to another, with the foot of one against the head of another. You will find children next to old men, women next to men (you may not believe it, but it is true). You may find a woman in labour next to a child who is suffering convulsions brought on by typhus and burning with a fever; both of them next to a person with a skin disease who is scratching his worn-out skin with bleeding nails and with pus dripping from his pustules, onto the covers. The food given to

the sick is of the worst type imaginable and is distributed in extremely small amounts at long intervals with no kind of system. The nuns favour those patients who manifest a hypocritical kind of obedience, at the expense of other patients, so they bring them wine and sweets and fattening foods that have been donated by well-wishers at a time when those patients are most in need of following a strict diet. Thus, many patients die from overeating, while others die of starvation. The doors of the hospital are always open, allowing anyone to come and go, thus further spreading disease. Disease is also spread through the hospital's garbage and putrid air. If charitable people did not donate to the sick, they would die of starvation, but they also die sometimes from overeating or from drinking too much wine. The beds are teeming with vermin insects, and the air in the rooms is so unbearably foul that the servants and nurses dare not enter the rooms until they have placed a sponge soaked in vinegar over their noses. The corpses of the dead are left for twenty-four hours or more before being removed from the bed, and often the corpses start to disintegrate and rot while they are still lying next to a patient who is almost losing his mind.

The comparison between the state of our hospitals during the peak of our civilization, and the state of the hospitals in the West at the same time, points to the extent of scientific decline of the West as well as their utter ignorance of the basics of running a hospital and even the most basic principles of good health. In the report that was narrated by the Arab Usâmah ibn Munqidh in *Kitâb al-I'tibar*, we see the extent of the Western Crusaders' ignorance of medicine and the ridiculous level of their doctor's knowledge. We can see that from the following two incidents:

One of the strange features of their (the Franks') medicine was that the (Frankish) ruler of al-Munaytarah wrote to my paternal uncle, asking him to send a doctor to treat the sick among his companions. He sent to him a Christian doctor whose name was Thâbit. He went and stayed there for ten days, and then he came back. We said to him: How quickly you have treated the sick! He said: They brought a knight to me who had an abscess on his foot and a woman who was suffering from consumption. I made a poultice for the knight that opened up the abscess, and it got better. I told the woman to follow a strict diet and gave her lots to drink. Then a Frankish doctor came to them and said: This man knows nothing about medicine! He said to the knight: Which would you prefer, to live with one foot or to die with two? He said: To live with one foot. He said: Bring me a strong knight and a sharp axe. The knight and the axe were brought while I was present. He put the man's leg up on a piece of wood and said to the knight: Cut it off with one blow. So he struck him with the axe while I was looking on, but the blow did not cut off his foot. He struck him again; the marrow flowed from his leg, and he died on the spot. Then he narrated how this Crusader doctor issued orders that the woman be immersed in boiling water, and she also died on the spot.

We end this discussion by drawing the reader's attention to the results after making these comparisons, which is that our civilization was at least nine centuries ahead of the West in organising hospitals. Also, our hospitals were based on noble humane emotions, the likes of which are unknown in history. In fact, they are unknown to the Westerners even today. We were the first nation to discover the far-reaching effects of permissible entertainment, comedic literature and positive thinking in healing the sick. We achieved a level of social security that Western



civilization has not reached even now in terms of medicine, treatment and food made available to the sick at no charge. We even used to give the poor person, who was convalescing, enough money to spend on their needs until they were able to return to work. We reached the pinnacle of such humane tendencies during the days when we carried the banner of civilization. What has become of us now, and what has become of the Westerners?

# CHAPTER 11

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## PRIVATE AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES

A topic that is related to the discussion of charitable and academic institutions in our civilization is that of libraries. Schools existed for the purpose of teaching, while charitable institutions were funded by rulers, rich individuals and scholars in order to spread knowledge among the people, especially in those days when there were no printing presses. Books were copied by hand by scribes who specialised in this task. This made books so expensive that poor students or scholars were unable to purchase them. How could a person read a collection of books on the art or science in which he was specialising? Therefore, libraries were established in our societies in the past, motivated by both humane emotions as well as academic inclinations.

Arabic literature may possibly be the richest of ancient world literatures in its praise of books, its fondness for them and in encouraging people to acquire them. It is as if a book is a beloved person who has been away for a long time and whose house is

very far away, so people's hearts are attached to them and they think of them constantly. Aḥmad ibn Ismâ'eel said:

A book is a friend who does not bother you when you are busy, who does not call you when you are doing something else, and who does not expect you to look nice for him. A book is a companion who does not praise you, a friend who does not try to tempt you or make you bored, an advisor who will not cheat you.

They used to prefer reading books to meeting people in gatherings; they felt more content with reading books than being close to a caliph or an authority figure.

Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Malik az-Zayyat, the literary vizier, confined himself in his house for some time. Al-Jâhiz wanted to visit him. He thought it best to bring him a gift of a book by Seebawayh, the eminent scholar of the Arabic language. The vizier accepted the gift joyfully and said to al-Jâhiz: "By Allah, you could not have brought me a gift any dearer than this!" One of the caliphs asked one of the scholars to visit him in the evening. The servant who brought the invitation arrived and found the scholar sitting surrounded by books that he was reading. He said to him: "Ameer al-Mu'mineen (the caliph) has invited you to join him." The scholar said to him: "I have wise men with me with whom I am discussing things. When I have finished with them, I will come." When the servant went back to the caliph and told him, he said: "Woe to you! Who are these wise men?" The servant said: "By Allah, O Ameer al-Mu'mineen, there was no one with him." The caliph said: "Bring him to me this instant!" When the scholar was brought to him, the caliph asked him: "Who are these wise men who were with you?" He said:

O Ameer al-Mu'mineen, they are companions whose speech does not bore, and who are honest and trustworthy, whether you are absent or present. When we sit with them, their speech will be the best help in eliminating worry and anxiety. They teach us the knowledge of those who passed away before us, and they teach us wisdom, discipline, advice and the way of leadership. We do not fear any betrayal or bad manners from them, and we are not trying to protect ourselves from their tongues or their hands. If you say that they are dead, you will not be lying, and if you say that they are alive, you will not be exaggerating.

The caliph realised that when he had said he was meeting wise men, he was referring to the scholars and wise men whose books he was reading, so he did not rebuke him for being late.

As-Sahib ibn 'Abbâs preferred to stay close to his library rather than accept a high position in the court of Nooh ibn Manşoor as-Samâni because he was very fond of his library. He could not go without it, and he could not carry it with him; thus, he preferred to stay close to it.

Because of this intellectual spirit, our scholars, rich individuals and rulers were fond of books and collecting them, so much so that a calamity that befell their wealth or houses would be easier for them to bear than a calamity that befell their books.

One day, soldiers attacked the house of Ibn al-'Ameed, after they had overpowered his slaves and guards. Ibn al-'Ameed fled to his official residence, where he found that all his stores had been robbed; he could not even find anything to sit on or a cup to drink water from. He was seized with anxiety about his books and papers, for nothing was dearer to him. He had many books covering all branches of knowledge, wisdom and literature — a

library which took more than one hundred camels to carry. When Ibn al-‘Ameed saw the servant who used to take care of his books, he asked him about them. The servant replied: “They are safe, and no one touched them.” Ibn al-‘Ameed was relieved; he said to his servant: “I bear witness that you are a real man, for the rest of the stores can be replaced, but this treasure [his library] cannot be replaced.”

Because of this intellectual spirit, they used to compete in buying academic works from their authors as soon as they were completed. Al-Ḥakam, governor of Andalusia, heard about the book *al-Aghâni*, which is now famous in the world of literature. He sent one thousand dinars to its author, Abul-Faraj al-Isfahâni, to buy a copy from him. Abul-Faraj sent him a copy of his book, and his book was read in Andalusia before it was read in Iraq, the author’s homeland.

This intellectual spirit led to the spread of libraries in all parts of the Muslim world. There was hardly any school that did not have a library beside it. It would also be difficult to find any small village that did not have a library. As for the capitals and larger cities, they were filled with libraries in a manner that was unmatched in medieval history.

Libraries were of two main types: public and private. Public libraries were founded by the caliphs, governors, scholars and rich individuals. Special buildings were constructed for them, and sometimes they were attached to mosques and major schools.

Private libraries included numerous rooms connected by spacious corridors. Books were placed on shelves attached to the walls. Each room was devoted to one branch of knowledge, so books on fiqh were gathered in one room, books on medicine in another, books on literature in another, and so on. There were

halls for the readers and rooms for the scribes who copied the books. In some libraries, there were rooms where readers could go to take a break and renew their energy. This was one of the unique features of our civilization. There were also rooms for study circles and academic discussions among the patrons of these libraries. All of them were comfortably furnished. Some of them also had rooms where the patrons could eat and where strangers could sleep, as in the case of ‘Ali ibn Yahyâ ibn al-Munajjim’s library. He had a large palace in a village near Baghdad, in which was a huge library known as the ‘Store of Wisdom’. People from all over would go there and would stay and acquire all kinds of knowledge. Books were made available to them, and food was provided for them, all from the wealth of ‘Ali ibn Yahyâ himself.

There were even more interesting cases than that, unknown even in today’s most advanced Western capitals. In Mosul, there was a house built by Abul-Qâsim Ja’far ibn Muhammad ibn Ḥamdân al-Mosuli, which he called the ‘House of Knowledge’; here he kept a store of books as a waqf for any seeker of knowledge, and no one would be turned away from it. Whenever poor strangers came to seek literature, he would give them books as well as money. This library was open daily. Have you ever heard of a library in London or Washington or any of the great capital cities of the world that provides literature and money to those who come to seek knowledge?

Public libraries had employees headed by the overseer of the library, who was always one of the most famous scholars of his time. There were also librarians who would go and retrieve books for the readers; translators who translated books from other languages into Arabic; scribes who copied books in their beautiful handwriting; and binders who would bind the books to protect

them from disintegrating or being lost. This was apart from the servants and others who took care of the libraries.

Each library, whether large or small, had an index which could be referred to in order to make it easier to locate and use the books. It was classified according to the categories of knowledge. In addition to this, there was a list on each set of shelves which listed the names of the books contained on those shelves. It was a known feature of the library system that, in most cases, borrowing books and taking them away outside the library was permitted in return for a deposit. This deposit was paid by the general public; scholars and prominent figures were not required to pay.

With regard to the financial resources that covered the expenses of these libraries, some of them were supported by religious endowments that were set up especially for that purpose. This was the case with most of the public libraries. Others were funded by donations from rulers, rich individuals and scholars who had founded those libraries. It is said that Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Malik az-Zayyât paid to the translators and scribes in his library a salary of two thousand dinars each month. Likewise, al-Ma'moon gave Ḥaneen ibn Is-hâq an amount of gold equal in weight to each book that he translated into Arabic.

The following are some examples of the public and private libraries that are well known in history.

One of the most famous libraries was the library of the Fâtimid caliphs in Cairo. This was a wonderful library that contained rare copies of the Qur'an and other books. According to many historians, it contained more than two million books. Al-Maqreezi has said that it contained one million, six hundred thousand books.

Another famous library was the 'House of Wisdom' in Cairo, which was founded by al-Ḥâkim ibn 'Amr-Allâh. It opened on the tenth of Jumada II, 395 AH. It had been furnished and decorated, and curtains had been hung on all its doors and in all its corridors. Supervisors, librarians and cleaners had been employed. It contained a collection of books unlike any amassed by any king before. It comprised four stories, one of which contained 18,000 books of ancient knowledge. Everyone was allowed to enter it. Some of them came to read books, while others came to copy them; yet others came to learn. It contained everything that anyone could need in terms of ink, pens, paper and inkwells.

Another famous library was the 'House of Wisdom' in Baghdad, which was founded by Hâroon ar-Rasheed. It reached the pinnacle of its glory during the time of al-Ma'moon. It was more like a university containing books, where people would gather to debate, read and copy books. There were scribes and translators, who translated whatever books ar-Rasheed and al-Ma'moon obtained during their conquests of Ankara, Amorium and Cyprus. Ibn an-Nadeem tells us that al-Ma'moon used to correspond with the Roman king; when al-Ma'moon defeated him in one of his battles, one of the conditions of the peace treaty was that the Roman king would permit the translation of all the books in his possession by scholars sent by al-Ma'moon. Accordingly, this was carried out. This is the best example in history of a victorious ruler who saw no greater reward for victory than the books of knowledge which he could bring to his own nation and country.

Another famous library was the library of al-Ḥakam in Andalusia. This was a huge library. It was said that it contained four hundred thousand volumes. It had an index that was so



precisely detailed and organised that the index of poetry collections alone was in forty-four parts. In that library were professional scribes who copied books and people who were highly-skilled in the art of bookbinding. In Andalusia, during that time, he amassed a collection of books the like of which had never been seen before or since.

Another famous library was the library of Bani 'Ammâr in Tripoli. This was a marvellous and huge library in which 180 scribes worked, copying books. They worked in shifts by night and day, so that the work of copying never ceased. Bani 'Ammâr were keen to fill their library with all kinds of rare and new books. Thus, they employed specialists and traders to travel and obtain useful books for them from all over the country and from foreign lands. Al-Ma'arri used this library and mentioned it in some of his books. There was some difference of opinion as to the number of books it contained, but the most likely opinion is that the number was one million.

Some private libraries have also been recorded in our history. In every city in the eastern and the western regions of the Muslim world, there were such libraries. You could rarely find a scholar who did not have his own library containing thousands of books.

One example is the library of al-Faḥḥ ibn Khâqân (who was killed in 247 AH). His library was huge; he had appointed one of the best men of his time in terms of knowledge and literature, namely 'Ali ibn Yaḥyâ al-Munajjim, to collect books for it. He amassed a large collection of books of wisdom that were never found anywhere else.

Another example is the library of Ibn al-Khashâb (d. 567 AH). He was one of the most well-versed people in grammar, and he also had knowledge of Qur'anic commentary, Hadith, logic and

philosophy. He was insatiably fond of books, which made him do some reprehensible things in order to collect them. If he went to the book market and wanted to buy a book, he would distract people and tear a page from the book; then he would say that it had something missing, so that he could buy it for a lower price. If he borrowed a book from someone, and the owner asked for it, he would say: "There is a big dispute between me and the book, and I cannot return it."

Another example is the library of Jamâl ad-Deen al-Qafâti (d. 646 AH). He collected innumerable books, which were brought to him in the hope of receiving some favour from him. He had no worldly interests apart from books, and he devoted himself to them. He refused to get married lest a wife and children distract him from his books. He bequeathed his library, which was worth fifty thousand dinars, to an-Nâşir.

Another example is the library of the scholars of Bani Jarâdah in Aleppo. One of them — Abul-Ḥasan ibn Abi Jarâdah (d. 548 AH) — transcribed three cupboards full of rare books with his own hand, including a cupboard of books belonging to his son Abul-Barakât and a cupboard belonging to his son 'Abdullâh.

Yet another example is the library of al-Muwafaq ibn al-Matrân ad-Dimashqi (d. 587 AH). He was extremely interested in acquiring books, so much so that when he died, his library contained ten thousand volumes on medicine and other topics. He had three scribes working for him full-time; he paid them salaries and provided food for them.

Even though we are pleased and proud when we speak of the spread of libraries in the Muslim world during the time when our civilization was flourishing, we are filled with sorrow when we

remember the fate of these libraries and how they were destroyed and burned. We cannot fully comprehend the loss of the knowledge that they contained.

Our libraries were destroyed, resulting in the loss of millions of books. They were lost to the world forever, books which were among the most precious products of humans thought in history.

The catastrophe wrought by the Tartars, when they conquered Baghdad, affected these libraries before it affected anything else. We all know that the barbarian Tartars threw all the books they found in the public libraries into the Tigris until the river overflowed; a horseman would cross from one side to the other on books. The water of the river was black for months from the ink of the books that were thrown into it.

The catastrophe wrought by the Crusaders deprived us of the libraries that had existed in Tripoli, al-Ma'arah, Jerusalem, Gaza, Ashkelon and other cities that they destroyed. It is sufficient for us to note that some historians estimate that the number of books destroyed by the Crusaders in Tripoli alone was three million.

The catastrophe of the Spanish conquest of Andalusia deprived us of magnificent libraries, which history addresses with astonishment. They were all burned by religious fanatics. Historians have estimated that in a single day, one million books were burned in the main square of Granada.

Apart from the calamities that befell us from beyond, there were those that befell us from within, as a result of internal turmoil. The library of the Fâtimid caliphs was destroyed when it was overrun by the masses of Mamluks and Turks, who lit fires in it; the slaves shared out the leather of the book bindings amongst themselves and made it into shoes. They threw a large number of

books into the Nile and took some of them to other regions. The rest of them were scattered in the wind and formed piles known as *tilâl al-kutub* (piles of books).

In Aleppo, there was a large library called *Khazanât aş-Şoofiyyah*. This was robbed during the troubles that arose between Sunnis and Shiites during the time of 'Âshoorâ' (the tenth day of the Islamic month of Muḥarram). Only a small part of it was left.

The library of al-Ḥâkim al-Muṣṭansir in Andalusia was destroyed as a result of internal turmoil when the Berbers entered Cordoba. Many of the books were sold, and the rest were confiscated.

The strangest disasters that make one laugh at what the fools do with knowledge and books include the following tale. The governor Ibn Fâtik, one of the governors of Egypt during the fifth century AH, had a huge library where he used to spend most of his time, rarely leaving it. He had a wife who held a high position in the state, but she was jealous of his books. When he died, she and her slave women went to the cupboards where the books were stored, feeling upset at the books and all the time he had spent with them and ignored her. As she started to wail for him, she and her slave women began throwing the books into a large pool of water in the middle of the house. This was the action of a woman who was overwhelmed by her anger towards the books; thus, she took her revenge on the books after her husband died. There have been many wives who felt jealous of their husbands' books, just as this lady did. Long ago, the wife of Imam az-Zuhri told him, when she saw him immersed in his book: "By Allah, these books are harder for me to bear than three co-wives!"

This is the story of our libraries during the ages of our civilization, and this is how they ended. Although it is difficult to

acknowledge good things about our enemies,<sup>35</sup> we have to acknowledge that the libraries of Europe have preserved a great deal of the remnants of this legacy for us. They have stores of Arabic books which cannot be found in the entire Muslim world today.

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<sup>35</sup> This refers to the Crusaders and then the colonialists who destroyed and took artifacts from Muslim countries. (Editor)

## CHAPTER 12

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### ACADEMIC GATHERINGS AND CONFERENCES

*T*his is an interesting aspect of our civilization, and it had a great impact in spreading education and propagating knowledge. It elevated the level of society's knowledge and sophistication by means of education. This refers to the academic gatherings and conferences which multiplied in our capitals and major cities, alongside many great schools, institutes and libraries. These gatherings, with their multiple and varied debates, were a brilliant manifestation of the intellectual awakening of our Ummah during the time of its glory and power. Without a doubt, if you had seen different classes of people, caliphs, governors, scholars, literati and poets holding discussions at private and open gatherings and engaging in philosophical, literary and academic competitions, you would have realised how this Ummah had reached a level of loving knowledge; you would have longed to drink from its springs and sense its glory and development.

These gatherings were of many different kinds:

Some of the gatherings that were held in the presence of the caliphs were led by the caliph himself. They were attended by the most famous scholars, literati and jurists in his capital. The gatherings of the caliphs developed as Islamic civilization and culture developed. During the time of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, discussions would focus on the affairs of the state and the conduct of the governors, like a parliament in which the leaders of the people discuss matters and issues that concern the state. For example, one day, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb (رضي الله عنه) needed a qualified governor whom he could appoint to take care of an important task that had to do with the affairs of the state. He said to his companions: “Show me a man I can appoint to take care of a matter that concerns me.” They suggested: “So-and-so.” He said: “We have no need for him.” They asked: “Who do you want?” He replied: “I want a man who, if he is with the people and not their leader, will look as if he is their leader; if he is their leader, he will look as if he is just one of them.” They said: “The only person we know who is like this is ar-Rabee‘ ibn Ziyâd al-Hâriṭhi.” He said: “You are right.” Thus, he appointed him.

During the time of the Umayyads, literature, wisdom and poetry were discussed in the gatherings of the caliphs.

One day ‘Abdullâh ibn Hâshim attended the gathering of Mu‘âwiyah, who asked: “Who will tell me about generosity, bravery and chivalry?” ‘Abdullâh said: “O Ameer al-Mu’mineen. Generosity means giving money, and giving before someone asks you. Bravery means being courageous when advancing and being patient when one’s feet start slipping out of fear (when retreating). As for chivalry, it means being religiously committed, putting things right and protecting one’s neighbour.”

One day ‘Abdul Malik said in one of his gatherings: “Who among you can tell me some parts of the body in alphabetical order?”<sup>36</sup> I will give him whatever he wants.” Suwayd ibn Ghufilah said: “I can do it, O Ameer al-Mu’mineen!” [The caliph] said: “Do it.” So Suwayd said: “Anf (nose), baṭn (stomach), tarquwah (collarbone), thaghr (mouth), jumjumah (skull), ḥalq (throat), khadd (cheek), dimâgh (brain)...” Another person in the gathering said: “O Ameer al-Mu’mineen, I can mention parts of the body in alphabetical order by twos.” Suwayd said: “I can do it by threes: anf, asnân, udhn (nose, teeth, ears)...” and he continued like that. ‘Abdul Malik was amazed at how quick-witted he was, and he rewarded him.

A Bedouin attended the gathering of ‘Abdul Malik once when the poet, Jareer, was present. ‘Abdul Malik asked the Bedouin: “Do you know anything about poetry?” The Bedouin replied: “Ask me whatever you want, O Ameer al-Mu’mineen.” He said: “Which verse has the most eloquent praise?” The Bedouin replied: “They are the words of Jareer:

*Are you not the best of those who rode on horses,  
the most generous of all people?”*

Jareer raised his head and stood tall. Then ‘Abdul Malik said: “Which verse is the most eloquent in speaking of pride?” The Bedouin replied: “They are the words of Jareer:

*When Banu Tameem got angry with me,  
I thought that all of humankind was angry with me.”*

Jareer stirred with happiness. Then ‘Abdul Malik asked: “Which verse is the most eloquent in condemnation?” The Bedouin said: “They are the words of Jareer:

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<sup>36</sup> according to the Arabic alphabet



*You should feel ashamed of yourself,  
for you are no more than a man from Numayr,  
and you have nothing to do with Ka'b or Kilâb."*

Jareer beamed at that. 'Abdul Malik said: "Which verse is the most eloquent in speaking of love?" The Bedouin said: "They are the words of Jareer:

*The eyes that have a marked contrast of white and black  
have killed us,  
then our dead will never be brought back to life."*

Jareer looked happy. Then 'Abdul Malik said: "Which verse is the most eloquent in making an analogy?" The Bedouin said: "They are the words of Jareer:

*A night came to them,  
whose stars were like lamps with the finest wicks."*

Jareer was so excited and happy that he said: "Give my reward to this Bedouin, O Ameer al-Mu'mineen." 'Abdul Malik said: "He will have double, and you will have your reward too, O Jareer; nothing will be deducted from it." Afterwards, the Bedouin left with eight thousand silver coins in his right hand and a pack of clothes in his left.

The gatherings of the caliphs developed further during the Abbasid era, when they were held in large rooms that were lavishly furnished. They were attended by many scholars and literati who discussed all kinds of subjects. This was in addition to the gatherings held for entertainment, wherein the content was largely poetry, poets and discussion of the meanings of words sung by the singers. Among the most famous of the Abbasid caliphs, in terms of the luxurious and fascinating nature of their gatherings, were ar-Rasheed and al-Ma'moon. The most

knowledgeable scholars in every field of art and science used to meet in the gatherings of ar-Rasheed. It is sufficient to note that among the poets who attended his gathering were Abu Nawwâs, Abul-‘Atâhiyah, Da’bal, Muslim ibn al-Waleed and al-‘Abbâs ibn al-Aḥnâf. Also, among the jurists who attended were Abu Yoosuf, ash-Shâfi‘i and Muhammad ibn al-Ḥasan. Among the scholars of Arabic language were Abu ‘Ubaydah, al-Asmâ‘i, and al-Kasâ‘i. Among the historians was the famous historian al-Wâqidi, and among the singers were Ibrâheem of Mosul and his son Is-ḥâq.

The following is an example of the literary debates which took place in these gatherings. One day, Seebawayh, al-Kasâ‘i and the leading scholars of Arabic language and literature were present in a gathering. Al-Kasâ‘i claimed that the Arabs would say: “*Kuntu adh-dhunnu az-zunboor ashadda las’an min an-nahlah, fa idha huwa iyyâha* (I used to think that the hornet’s sting was worse than the bee’s, but it is the same).” Seebawayh said, “No, the correct way to say it is *fa idha huwa hiya* (but it is the same).” They disputed this point for a long time; then, they agreed to refer the matter to a ‘pure’ Arab (meaning, an Arab from the desert) who was not influenced by the speech of the city-dwellers. Ar-Rasheed was extremely fond of al-Kasâ‘i, who had been his teacher before he had become the caliph. He summoned an Arab and asked him; the Arab said the phrase was as Seebawayh had said it. He told him: “We want you to say it the way al-Kasâ‘i said it.” The Arab replied: “My tongue cannot do that.” Finally, he agreed that when they asked him about this matter in front of others, he would say: “Al-Kasâ‘i is right.” This was done in front of a large gathering; Seebawayh realised that they were ganging up on him. Thus, he left Baghdad in sorrow. It is said that he did not live very long after that and died of a broken heart.

One of the debates of fiqh that took place in his gathering was when Muhammad ibn al-Ḥasan, the companion of Abu Ḥaneefah, described al-Kasâ'i as not having a good knowledge of fiqh; he said that he only had good knowledge of Arabic. Al-Kasâ'i said: "Whoever becomes proficient in one branch of knowledge will be guided in other branches of knowledge." In view of that, Muhammad tested him by asking: "What do you say about a person who makes a mistake in the prostration of forgetfulness? Should he prostrate again?" Al-Kasâ'i said: "No." Muhammad asked: "Why not?" Al-Kasâ'i answered: "Because the grammarians say that you cannot form a diminutive from a diminutive."

The gatherings of al-Ma'moon were some of the most remarkable academic gatherings in the history of Islamic civilization because he was one of the most prominent scholars himself. His court was filled with a vast number of scholars, literati, poets, doctors and philosophers, whom al-Ma'moon had invited from all parts of his kingdom. He honoured all of them, regardless of their intellectual inclinations or national origins. He would often start debates and provoke scholars to discuss things. However, he forbade philosophers and scholars from supporting their arguments with verses from their holy books while they were in his gathering. He would say to them: "Do not quote from the Qur'an or from the Gospel, hoping to pressure me into accepting your argument. I do not wish to be a non-Arab, lest that leads me to reject the truth." Then he explained to them why he preferred Arabs over others. It was because when they were in the desert, they had no books and no knowledge. Despite that, they had learned about plants and the land through their innate common sense; they had also discovered what was good for their sheep and camels. They had learned about time and the different seasons;

thus, they divided the year into spring, summer, autumn and winter. They learned that drinking water comes from the sky, and this led them to understand the climate and the changes of time. They learned how to use the stars in the sky to navigate on land. They agreed among themselves on something, which stopped them from committing evil actions and encouraged doing good deeds. It made them avoid ignoble traits and pursue noble characteristics. Thus, even though they lived in rough terrain and their life was harsh, any of them could describe what noble characteristics were completely, leaving nothing to be added. They could fully describe blameworthy characteristics, leaving nothing out. They had nothing to talk about except urging good deeds, taking care of neighbours, spending money and doing praiseworthy things. All of them were guided to these virtues by their innate common sense, without any teaching or disciplinary process; it all stemmed from natural wisdom. Because of this, Ibn al-Muqaffa' said: "For this reason, I say to you that they are the wisest of nations because of their sound innate nature and physical make-up, their right way of thinking and their understanding."

We should not neglect to mention the role of booksellers, because bookshops were also places where scholars gathered. They had some of their best conversations there, in which they exchanged knowledge, with each of them speaking about the branch of knowledge in which he had specialised. Booksellers were usually literate and educated men, who had benefited from their profession in order to satisfy their longing for knowledge. It is sufficient for you to know that Ibn an-Nadeem, author of *al-Fihrist*, and Yâqoot, author of *Mu'jam al-Udâba'* and *Mu'jam al-Buldân*, were both booksellers. Abul-Faraj al-Isfahâni, author of *al-Aghâni*, and Abu Naşr az-Zajjâj, the famous scholar of language and literature, used to meet in the bookshops and speak

about poetry and literature with the poets who used to come to these shops. In one of their meetings, Abul-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Yoosuf, the poet, was sitting with the bookseller, Abul-Faṭḥ ibn al-Hazzâz, when he was reciting the poetry of Ibrâheem ibn al-‘Abbâs as-Sawli, in which he says:

*He saw my poverty even though it was not obvious at all,  
And that pained his eyes until it disappeared.*

When he reached this line, he liked it very much and repeated it. Abu Naṣr az-Zajjâj said: “Abul-Faraj told me to get up, go to him, and say: ‘You seem to like this line too much. Where is the beauty in it?’ So I went and said that to him. He explained: ‘I like the phrase: and that pained his eyes.’ I went back to al-Isfahâni and told him that. He told me: ‘Go back to him and tell him he is wrong. The beauty in it is the phrase: even though it was not obvious at all.’”

Concerning this, one of the poets said:

*Sitting in the marketplace is something blameworthy,  
but some gatherings may be good.  
Do not go anywhere, except the horse market,  
the weapons market and the book market.  
For the former provide tools for the men of war,  
and the latter provides tools for the men of literature.*

He spoke the truth. We need to know about weapons and war, but we also need knowledge and literature. This is essential for every noble human being who wants to live a life of integrity and dignity.

The nation that deserves to live is one that finds its nourishment in knowledge above all else. Our Ummah, which restored life to other nations and peoples, used all methods of

acquiring, spreading and propagating knowledge. Indeed, all the people of this Ummah, from the caliph to scholars and traders, used to compete in accumulating the tools of knowledge and books, and in building schools where, as you have seen, the only discussions were on topics that increased knowledge and broadened and enlightened minds. Even gatherings for the purpose of entertainment and leisure were scholarly and literary, and the time was used to discuss matters, explain subtle issues and correct mistakes, as we see from the following historical example:

In one of the gatherings of the caliph al-Wâthiq, a slave woman sang the following line of verse:

*O wrongdoer, your mistreating a man [innâ musabakum rajulân] who gave you salâms<sup>37</sup> as a greeting is wrongdoing [dhulmun].*

One of the people present thought that her saying *rajulân* [a man, accusative] was wrong.<sup>38</sup> This is because he thought that this was the predicate of the particle *innâ* (often translated as ‘verily’ or ‘indeed’), which should appear in the nominative. He did not realise that the word *rajul* (man) was the object of the verbal noun *musabakum* (your mistreating), and the predicate of *innâ* in this phrase was the word *dhulm* (wrongdoing). The slave woman did not accept this man’s view and said: “I do not accept this, and I am not going to change it. I have recited it like this to the most learned man in Basrah, Abu ‘Uthmân al-Mâzini.” Al-Wâthiq ordered that he be brought from Basrah to Baghdad. Al-Mâzini said: “When I came to al-Wâthiq, he asked me my name. I told him: ‘Bakr ibn Muhammad al-Mâzini.’ He said: ‘Mâzin Shaybân or Mâzin Tameem [which Mâzin tribe]?’ I replied: ‘Mâzin Shaybân.’ He

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<sup>37</sup> the Islamic greeting of peace (Editor)

<sup>38</sup> The following explanation concerns a point in Arabic grammar. (Editor)

asked: 'Tell us what you think about this matter.' I said: 'O Ameer al-Mu'mineen, I am nervous because of you.'" Then he brought at-Toozi, the man who had said that the slave woman was wrong when he was in the house of al-Wâthiq. Al-Mâzini said to him: "What do you say about the sentence *Innâ ɢarbaka Zaydân dhulmun* (Verily your beating Zayd is wrongdoing)?" At-Toozi said: "That is sufficient for me," and he understood.<sup>39</sup>

We have not spoken here of the gatherings of the jurists, Hadith scholars and preachers, for these were widespread in every city and village.

In summary, during the period when our civilization was flourishing, the Muslim world was filled with the light of knowledge. This illuminated their houses, mosques, schools, institutions, gatherings and shops. Even a great scholar like Gustave Le Bon said rightfully:

The Arabs had a great love of knowledge and they attained a high level of culture in a short period after their conquests, enabling them to build a civilization in which literature, science and art flourished and reached their pinnacle.

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<sup>39</sup> He realised his mistake and understood al-Mâzini's point.

## CHAPTER 13

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### CAPITALS AND MAJOR CITIES

Now we will turn to the fourth century AH/tenth century CE, and look briefly at the cities of the Muslim world and the cities of the West. You will notice a huge difference between the two worlds. You will be astonished at the sight of a world teeming with life, strength and civilization, namely the Muslim world, and a primitive world with no trace of life, knowledge or civilization, which is the Western world. We will try to compare the cities of these two worlds, starting with the Western world. We will note the way its people lived, the size of its cities and their standard of living.

It says in *The History of Knowledge*, by Avis and Rambeau, that from the seventh century CE until after the tenth century, Anglo-Saxon England made poor use of its agricultural resources and was cut off from other countries, existing primitively. Houses were built of exposed stone with mud used as mortar, built on flat low land, with small windows that could not be closed properly. Stables and barns did not have windows. Cattle and poultry, which were the main source of livelihood, frequently died from diseases



and epidemics. People were no better off than animals, in terms of accommodation and security. The chief of a tribe usually lived in his hut with his family, servants and others, all together in a large room, in the middle of which would be a hearth that sent smoke up through a rough hole in the roof. They all ate at one table, with the master and his consort sitting on one side. Forks were unknown, and cups did not have flat bottoms; each person had to keep his cup in his hand or empty it in one swallow. In the evening, the master would go to his bedroom, after eating, drinking and carousing. The table and benches would be removed, and all the people present would sleep in that room, either on the floor or on raised platforms. All of them would place their weapons by their heads because thieves were so audacious that people had to be constantly on guard, lest they were caught unawares.

During that time, Europe was covered with thick forests and was backward in terms of agriculture. There were many swamps on the outskirts of the cities, and they emitted lethal odours that killed people in large numbers. The houses of Paris and London were built of wood and mud, mixed with straw and reeds (like village houses in our country fifty years ago).<sup>40</sup> They had no windows, and carpets were entirely unknown; the only floor-covering they had was straw spread on the floor. They had no concept of hygiene; they would throw animal entrails and kitchen waste in front of their houses, causing foul odours. One family would sleep in a single room — men, women and children together; in many instances, their livestock would be in the same room with them. For them, the word ‘bed’ referred to a sack filled with straw, on top of which would be a sack filled with wool,

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<sup>40</sup> This book was originally written more than fifty years ago, so the author is referring to village houses more than one hundred years ago. (Editor)

which was used as a pillow. Their streets had no sewers, pavements or lamps. The greatest city in Europe contained no more than twenty-five thousand inhabitants.

This is how the West was during the Middle Ages, until the eleventh century or later, as their own historians admit. Now let us move quickly, before we forget this image, to the East and to such cities and capitals as Baghdad, Damascus, Cordoba, Granada and Seville. Let us see how these cities were and what our civilization was like.

Let us visit the cities of Andalusia, which were neighbours of the Europe that we have just discussed. We will start with Cordoba and focus on its main features, not on every detail. What will we find?

During the time of the Umayyad caliph ‘Abdur-Rahmân III, Cordoba was the capital of Andalusia. It was illuminated with lamps at night. Through these lamps, a person could find his way walking ten miles (sixteen kilometres) from the city. Its streets were paved with stones; garbage was regularly removed from the streets. It was surrounded by beautiful gardens; anyone coming to the city could enjoy the sight of gardens and orchards for hours before they reached it. Its inhabitants numbered more than one million, at a time when the largest city in Europe had no more than twenty-five thousand inhabitants. There were nine hundred baths, 283,000 houses, eighty thousand palaces and six hundred mosques. The circumference of the city was eight parasangs (thirty thousand cubits). Everyone in the city was educated. In the Eastern side of the city, there were 170 women who all used to copy Qur’ans in Kufi<sup>41</sup> script; this was in just one quarter of the

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<sup>41</sup> A type of script used in writing the Qur’an, originating in Kufa, Iraq.

city. There were eighty schools in which the poor could study for free, as well as fifty hospitals. As for its mosque, its traces remain today as a lasting sign of artistry and creativity. The minarets were forty cubits high; the magnificent dome rested on pillars of carved wood, which in turn rested on columns made from different kinds of marble in a checkerboard pattern. It was lit at night by 4,700 lamps, which used 24,000 ratls of oil each year. On the south side, there were nineteen doors covered with expertly manufactured bronze plates, apart from the middle door, which was plated with gold. On the east and west sides, there were nine doors similar to those on the south side. As for the niche indicating the direction of prayer, it is sufficient to note what the European historians said concerning it: "It is the most beautiful thing that humankind has ever set eyes on. Nothing can match its beauty and adornment."

Later on, the palace of az-Zahrâ', which has gone down in history for its artistic wonder, was built in Cordoba. The Turkish historian Diya Pasha said of it:

It was the wonder of all time, for it had never crossed anyone's mind to build something like this since the time Allah created the universe. Such a design never entered the mind of any engineer since the time when human reason was created.

Its domes rested on 4,316 pillars of various kinds of marble, engraved with symmetrical designs. Its floor was paved with multicoloured pieces of marble in a beautiful design, and its walls were covered with lapis lazuli and gold. In its courtyards were fountains of fresh water that flowed and disappeared in pools of white marble of various shapes until it disappeared in a pool in the courtyard of the caliph. In the middle of the pool were swans made of gold, with pearls suspended from their heads. In the water

were thousands of fish of different types; the amount of bread thrown to them daily was twelve thousand loaves.

In az-Zahrâ', there was a hall called the Caliph's Palace. Its roof and walls were made of thick layers of pure gold and marble. In the middle of it was a huge pool filled with mercury. On each side of the hall, there were eight doors with frames of ivory and ebony, decorated with gold and all kinds of jewels, resting on pillars of multi-coloured marble and clear glass. The sun's rays would enter the hall through these doors and strike the centre and walls of the hall, dazzling the eyes. When an-Nâsir wanted to scare anyone in his court, he would gesture to his slaves to stir up the mercury. It would appear as if flashes of lightning were in the hall, terrifying the people who were present. They would believe that the whole room was flying as long as the mercury continued moving. The palace was surrounded by beautiful gardens and spacious squares, beyond which was a huge wall that encompassed this magnificent complex. This wall had three hundred war towers. Az-Zahrâ' included the houses of the caliph and princes, along with the women's quarters and huge halls where the king sat in a special place. It had a dome with bricks made of gold and silver, but the judge, Mundhir ibn Sa'eed, denounced the caliph for this in front of a huge crowd of people in the main mosque of Cordoba. Consequently, the caliph knocked it down and rebuilt it with bricks of clay. It also contained workshops: one for making weapons, another for making jewellery, another for engraving, and other workshops for other kinds of arts and crafts. The construction of az-Zahrâ' took four years. On average, six thousand stones were quarried each day, apart from the stones used in paving. The number of workers who laboured on it each day was ten thousand; they used 1400 mules and brought 1100 loads of lime and plaster every three days.

Every day, one thousand skilled artisans worked on the construction of the mosque of *az-Zahrâ'*. This included three hundred builders, two hundred carpenters and five hundred skilled hired labourers, among other workers. It was built in only forty-eight days, a speed rarely ever matched.

In the great palace, in 351 AH, Caliph al-Muṣṭanṣir met the king of Christian Spain, Ordoño II, son of Alfonso III. He was stunned when he entered *az-Zahrâ'* and saw how magnificent and enormous it was, with its servants and soldiers with their weapons. He was even more amazed when he reached the meeting room of the caliph al-Muṣṭanṣir with the leaders of his kingdom — nobles, prominent scholars, preachers and commanders — standing beside him. When the Spanish king approached the caliph al-Muṣṭanṣir, he uncovered his head, took off his cloak and remained bareheaded until the caliph gave him permission to come nearer. When he came towards the caliph, he fell prostrate for a while then stood up, took a few steps forwards and prostrated again. He did this several times until he came in front of the caliph. He knelt down to kiss his hand, and the caliph gave him his hand. Then he walked backwards, not turning his back towards the caliph, and sat down on a chair that had been prepared for him. The caliph said, welcoming him: "Be of good cheer, for whatever you are hoping for, you will have. We think highly of you, and we welcome you more than you think." When the words of the caliph were translated to him, he felt so happy that he came down from his chair and kissed the carpet. Then he said:

I am the slave of Ameer al-Mu'mineen, my protector, with whose blessings I am showered, who is ruling me and my men. Wherever he wants me to be, I will be grateful, and however he wants me to serve him, I will do it with the utmost sincerity.

The caliph said to him:

You are highly thought of among us, like one who deserves our approval. You will have preferential treatment from us over the rest of your people (fellow Christians), which will make you happy, because of your seeking our generosity and the shade of our authority.

See how powerful were the words spoken by the caliph al-Muṣtaṣir. The king of Spain heard them and hardly had he understood them before he fell down prostrate once again, praying for the caliph because of his compassionate behaviour, granting him protection.

If we move on to Granada, the grandeur of the construction of the Alhambra palace will become apparent to us. It was a marvel that astonished all who looked at it. Despite the passage of time, it is still a focal point for tourists from all over the world. This palace is built on a slope overlooking the city of Granada, with fertile fields covering a wide area; it is one of the most beautiful places in the world. It contained many rooms, such as the Courtyard of the Lions, the Hall of the Two Sisters, the Hall of Justice, and the Ambassadors' Hall. We cannot, in this brief discussion, describe Alhambra fully. It is sufficient for us to note the words of the French poet, Victor Hugo:

O Alhambra, O Alhambra! O palace whom the angels decorated in the most imaginative fashion and made you a marvel of harmony. O honourable citadel, adorned with engravings of flowers and branches going into decline. When the silver rays of the moon are reflected on your walls through your arabesque arches we hear from you a voice that is magical.

A discussion of the luxury and glory in other cities of Andalusia would take too long. It is sufficient for us to mention that in Seville alone, there were six hundred looms for weaving silk. It was surrounded on all sides by olive trees; hence, there were one hundred thousand olive presses in the city for the production of olive oil.

In conclusion, the cities of Spain were highly developed, and each city was famous for some kind of industry that was popular in Europe. Spain was even famous for the production of shields and helmets, which the Europeans bought wherever they could. Renault says in his book *The Attack on France* that:

When the Arabs launched their attack from Spain on the south of France and, under the leadership of as-Samâh al-Khoolâni, ‘Anbasah al-Kalbi and al-Hirr ath-Thaqafi, conquered the cities of Narbonne, Fort de Chao, Avignon and Lyon, they were equipped with weapons the like of which were unavailable to the Franks.

Now let us move on to the eastern part of the Muslim world, where we will see examples of its major cities and brilliant civilization. We will limit ourselves to Baghdad and how it was one of the wonders of the world when it was built, the like of which had never been seen in the ancient world.

Before it was built by the famous Abbasid caliph al-Manşoor, Baghdad was a small village where, at the start of the new year, traders would gather from nearby places. When al-Manşoor decided to build it, he brought together engineers and people who knew about construction and surveying. He laid the first stone with his own hand and said: “In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Praise be to Allah.

﴿... إِنَّ الْأَرْضَ لِلَّهِ يُورِثُهَا مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ﴾  
(سورة الأعراف: ١٢٨)

«...Indeed, the earth belongs to Allah. He causes to inherit it whom He wills of His servants. And the [best] outcome is for the righteous»  
(*Qur'an* 7: 128)

Build with Allah's blessing.”

The total amount spent on its construction was 4,800,000 dirhams. The workers who laboured on it numbered 100,000. It was encircled by three concentric walls and inhabited by two million people. The streets and alleys numbered six thousand in the eastern half and four thousand in the western half. Besides the Tigris and Euphrates, there were eleven minor rivers whose waters entered all the houses and palaces of Baghdad. Along the Tigris alone, there were thirty thousand crossing points. The number of baths reached sixty thousand, but by the end of the Abbasid period this number had fallen to a little less than twenty thousand. There were three hundred thousand mosques, and among its inhabitants were innumerable scholars, literati and philosophers. We will quote here what Abu Bakr al-Khaṭīb said, describing Baghdad:

Even though we did not describe many of the features by which Allah has made it distinct from all others cities in the East and in the West, it has many good and pleasing characteristics, plentiful fresh water, beautiful and delicious fruits, beautiful locations, brilliance in craftsmanship, availability of anything one may need, freedom from signs of undesired innovations in religion, the joy of having many learned scholars, well-versed jurists, leading philosophers, prominent mathematicians and grammarians, leading poets,



narrators of reports and lineages, literati and artists versed in all forms of art. It brings together the fruits of all times in one time, which happens in no other city on earth, especially in the autumn. If people find that their house is too small, it is easy for them to find a better house, and they will not find it difficult to move to any part of the city they like. If people are fleeing from an enemy, they will find someone to hide them, near or far. If they want to move from one house, street or alley to another, it is possible for them to do so, depending on the time and circumstances. Prominent merchants, respectable authority figures and people from leading noble families live in specific areas, and they continually send charitable donations to those who are less well off than themselves. These are all blessings from Allah, the extent of which no one knows except Allah Himself.

He also said:

Baghdad is unmatched by any other city in its glory and splendour; its many scholars and prominent figures; the unique nature of its elite and masses; its spaciousness; the vastness of its outskirts; the large number of houses, alleys, streets, shops, markets, mosques, baths, and inns; its fresh air; the sweetness of its water; the coolness of its shade; the mildness of its summer and winter; the pleasantness of its spring and autumn and the great number of its inhabitants. It reached its developmental peak at the time of ar-Rasheed, when the world was peaceful, milk for nursing babies was abundant, and fields for grazing were fertile. Then tribulations befell it, and a succession of calamities overwhelmed its people. Its buildings were destroyed, its people moved away and, until relatively recently, in spite of all its troubles and woes, it was still different from all other cities.

We will conclude this discussion with a description of its greatness during the time of al-Muqtadir Billâh and the level of glory that the caliphate reached in his time, when Baghdad was visited by the envoy of the Roman king. The palace of the caliph was bigger than any large city in Syria nowadays. There were eleven thousand eunuchs and thousands of other servants. Each shift of caretakers numbered four thousand.

When the envoy of the Roman king came for a visit, he stayed in a guest house. The soldiers stood in ranks from the guesthouse to the caliph's palace; they numbered one hundred and sixty thousand and included cavalry and infantry. The envoy travelled between them until he reached the palace, where he greeted the caliph. He was then taken on a tour of the palace complex, which had been emptied for the occasion, leaving behind only seven thousand servants, seven hundred guards and four thousand black slaves. The stores of weaponry, in which weapons were arranged like a bridegroom's clothes, were opened.

When the envoy of the Roman king entered the House of the Tree, he was stunned. It was a tree made of silver, whose weight was five hundred thousand dirhams. It had eighteen branches, all of which had lesser branches on which there were birds of all kinds, made of gold and silver. Most of the trunk of this tree was silver, and part of it was gold. It was able to sway. It had leaves of different colours, which moved like the leaves of a tree stirred by the wind. All of these gold and silver birds chirped and twittered. Beside the House of the Tree, there were statues of fifteen knights on fifteen horses, dressed in brocade and carrying spears, placed in a circle as if each one was chasing another.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> This kind of extravagance, as well as images and statues, are impermissible in Islam.

Then he was taken into the palace known as al-Firdaws, in which were innumerable weapons. He was taken from palace to palace within the caliph's palace complex until he had visited twenty-three palaces. They returned to the court of al-Muqtadir Billâh after having stopped seven times to rest. The historians mention that twenty-two thousand carpets were spread in the caliph's palace for the visit of the Roman king's envoy, apart from the carpets and rugs that were already in the corridors and sitting rooms. In the palaces of the caliph's home, thirty-eight thousand curtains of brocade, interwoven with gold, were hung.

One of the places that the Roman king's envoy was shown on his visit was the menagerie, which contained all kinds of wild and tame animals. He also visited the Elephant House, where there were four elephants, each of which was cared for by eight sub-continent Indians; and the Lion House, where there were one hundred lions, fifty on the right and fifty on the left. Each lion was cared for by a lion tamer, and the lions had chains of iron on their heads and necks. Undoubtedly, the envoy of the Roman king was astonished when he saw the greatness of the caliph's palace. At that time, there was no palace on earth like this.

What we have mentioned is sufficient to illustrate the wonder of our civilization at the peak of its greatness and power.

# GLOSSARY OF ISLAMIC TERMS<sup>43</sup>

<i>Ameer al-Mu'mineen</i>	أمير المؤمنين	'Commander of the Faithful'; the leader of the Muslims
<i>Anṣâr</i>	أنصار	'helpers': the Muslim citizens of Madinah who gave refuge to the Prophet (ﷺ) and the other Muslim emigrants from Makkah
'Âshoorâ'	عاشوراء	the tenth day of the Islamic month of Muḥarram; it is recommended that Muslims fast on this day to commemorate the victory of Prophet Moosâ (ﷺ) over the Pharaoh
<i>dinar (deenâr)</i>	دينار	originally, a gold coin; a unit of currency
<i>dirham</i>	درهم	a silver coin; a unit of currency
<i>Eid ('eed)</i>	عيد	<i>lit.</i> festival; the two celebrations: one at the end of Ramadan and the other at the culmination of the Hajj

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<sup>43</sup> The Arabic words are transliterated according to the conventions of the Transliteration Chart found in this book. If a word has become part of the English language (i.e., is found in a dictionary of Standard English), that spelling is used in this book and appears first in this Glossary, with the transliterated form in brackets after it.

<i>fiqh</i>	فقه	Islamic jurisprudence; understanding or interpreting Islamic law
<i>fitnah</i>	فتنة	lit. trial, temptation; (attempting to sow) discord between Muslims
<i>Hadith</i> ( <i>ḥadeeth</i> )	حديث	the collected statements and actions of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that with the Qur'an form the basis of Islamic law
<i>hadith</i> ( <i>ḥadeeth</i> )	حديث	a statement or action of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that was remembered and recorded by his Companions and followers
<i>Hajj (ḥajj)</i>	حج	the major pilgrimage to the Sacred Mosque, site of the Ka'bah at Makkah, to be undertaken by every able Muslim once in his/her lifetime
<i>Hijrah</i>	هجرة	migration: <i>esp.</i> the migration from Makkah to Madinah by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and his Companions that marks the start of the Islamic calendar
<i>inshallah</i> ( <i>in shâ'Allah</i> )	أن شاء الله	God willing
<i>jâhiliyah</i>	جاهلية	lit. 'ignorance'; the age of spiritual darkness before Islam
<i>jizyah</i>	جزية	a tax levied on the people of the Scriptures when they are under the protection of a Muslim government; it is in lieu of the alms tax paid by Muslims

<i>Kaaba (Ka'bah)</i>	كعبة	The house of Allah in Makkah, originally built by Prophets Ibrâheem and Ismâ'eel, and which Muslims face wherever they pray
<i>madh-hab</i>	مذهب	school of juristic thought
<i>Maghreb</i>	المغرب	the area that includes the current states of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya
<i>Muhâjiroon</i> (or <i>Muhâjireen</i> )	مهاجرون	<i>lit.</i> emigrants (of any kind); in Islamic discourse this term is used to refer to people who emigrate to safeguard their religion, and specifically, the Muslims who migrated with Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) from Makkah to Madinah
<i>mujâhid</i> ( <i>pl. mujâhideen</i> )	مجاهد	one who strives in the way of Allah; a fighter in jihad
<i>mursal</i>	مرسل	a category of hadith: a narration that a tâbi'ee ascribes to the Prophet (ﷺ) without mentioning the Companion from whom he took it
<i>qibla (qiblah)</i>	القبلة	the bearing from the Kaaba to any point on Earth; the direction that all Muslims must face in prayer
<i>Quraysh</i>	قريش	the dominant tribe in Makkah at the time of the Prophet's mission; their society was based on polytheism
<i>salâm</i>	السلام	peace; the greeting of peace
<i>Sharia (shari'ah)</i>	شريعة	Islamic law derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah
<i>shaykh</i>	شيخ	teacher, mentor; scholar

<i>tâbi'oon</i> (sg. <i>tâbi'ee</i> )	التابعون	'Successors'; those who knew or met any of the Companions and transmitted hadiths from them
<i>tawḥeed</i>	التوحيد	the Oneness of Allah: that He alone deserves to be worshipped and that He has no partners
<i>Ummah</i>	أمة	community or nation: <i>usu.</i> used to refer to the entire global community of Muslims
<i>waqf</i>	وقف	trust; an inalienable endowment for a charitable purpose
<i>zakât</i> ( <i>zakâh</i> or <i>zakât</i> )	زكاة	obligatory charity: an 'alms tax' on wealth payable by Muslims and to be distributed to other Muslims who qualify as recipients